ANGLO-SAXON MONASTERIES OF THE NORTH

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Documentary evidence, largely the work of Bede, provides us with the names of twenty-two monasteries in Northumbria which can be equated with the names of modern settlements. However, within the modern settlements themselves it is more difficult to locate the actual sites, since usually recent development has encroached destroying all early features save the church and churchyard. Thus there is nothing to set alongside the splendid series of air photographs of Irish sites as shown in Norman and St Joseph (1969, 90-121). As I shall show later in relation to Tynemouth or Hartlepool, where there is not even a visible enclosure, it is sometimes difficult to know whether early buildings which have been excavated in fairly close proximity to the existing parish church, belonged to the Anglo-Saxon monastery or not. No site has been excavated of the Aidanic Church, which could illustrate in Northumberland the traditions of Iona, although Brian Hope-Taylor has made some small cuttings on Lindisfarne. We know from Bede (HE, III, 25-6) that the buildings on Lindisfarne were poor and few and even the church was of wood - but there are literary references to a communal refectory which implies there were other major buildings.

The documented foundations of Irish monks in England which have been so far excavated are not in Northumbria. We have Glastonbury in the Celtic south-west, but today I would like to draw to your attention a site in Suffolk which is unique and unpublished - Burgh Castle. I had hoped its excavator Charles Green could speak at this Forum, but very sadly he has died recently. I am grateful to his daughter for giving me access to his plans which I have re-drawn, although I cannot pretend to understand everything about the excavation, and I have not been through the finds. The site lies inside the enclosure of a massive Roman fort, six acres in area, with walls 9 ft thick. Bede (HE, III, 19) describes the foundation when he tells how some time after 630 'There came a holy man from Ireland called Fursa. He was renowned in word and deed.' After a time he received from the East Anglian king a site for a monastery: '...now the monastery was pleasantly situated close to the woods and the sea, in a Roman camp which is called in English "Cnobheresburgh". The successor King Anna and his nobles endowed it with still finer buildings and gifts.

Before Green's excavations in 1960-1, ploughing in 1957-8 had brought up Saxon plaster in the NE angle and skeletons in the SW angle of the fort. There had also been some small trial excavations in 1855. The motte in the SW corner was demolished in 1839, and at that time, also, human bones were found. The cemetery, which Green excavated in 1960, produced at least 144 interments, also pits containing dumps of re-interred bones. On the S side only did the excavator think he had the cemetery limit and in that area considered there was possibly a church. All bodies lay supine and there was a variation in orientation between N 85° and N 121°. Green did not consider this was because of different burial periods, but because burial orientation was fixed by the position of the sun at different times of the year. He considered that the cemetery had an extended life from say seventh to tenth centuries and was used by a neighbouring lay population. The cemetery overlaid the floor of a Roman building, and there were at least three levels of burial. The lowest showed large graves which could be multiple and therefore implied a disastrous beginning for the occupation.

In the extreme NE corner of the site Saxon huts were found but it must be stressed how large an area is unexcavated in between. The huts were contained in about 90 ft by 50 ft and could have spread further S and W, but in the NE are bounded by a group of post holes implying buildings of different construction (Fig. 1). Three levels of post-Roman occupation were found, and at least two of these had structures. The earlier were associated with Ipswich ware and the later with late Saxon pottery. The layers in the area of the huts seem to be: a Roman floor lying on natural sand; above this a layer of destruction sealed by a layer of sandy clay, possibly a floor since it was cut by post holes and associated with a spread of fish debris; above this a smooth brown layer into which the hut footings were cut. In one place this sealed a pit associated with an Ipswich ware sherd, above this was a layer of dark earth associated with later Saxon material. It is not clear on the evidence I have seen whether this later accumulated after the hut occupation. This brown layer was then covered by disturbed top soil.

The huts were of at least two periods, Hut 4 earlier than 5, and 3 than 1. However there is no significant change in their dimensions and construction. They vary however in internal dimensions, for example Hut 2 is 14 ft by 10 ft, Hut 3 is 18 ft by 10 ft; Huts 4 and 7 are 24 ft by 14 ft, and Hut 5 is 20 ft by 10 ft. They appear to have had rammed clay floors, and their slots varied in width from 5 in to nearly 1 ft. The excavator concluded

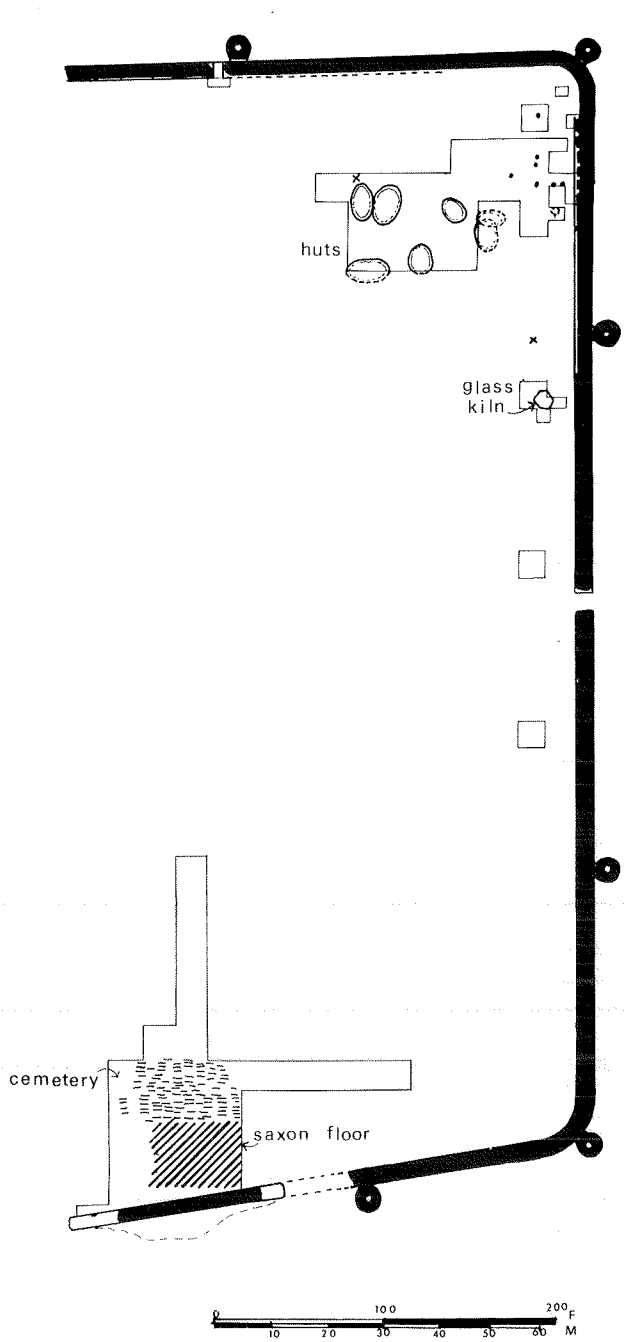

Figure 1a. Burgh Castle (Suffolk); 1960-1, after Charles Green.

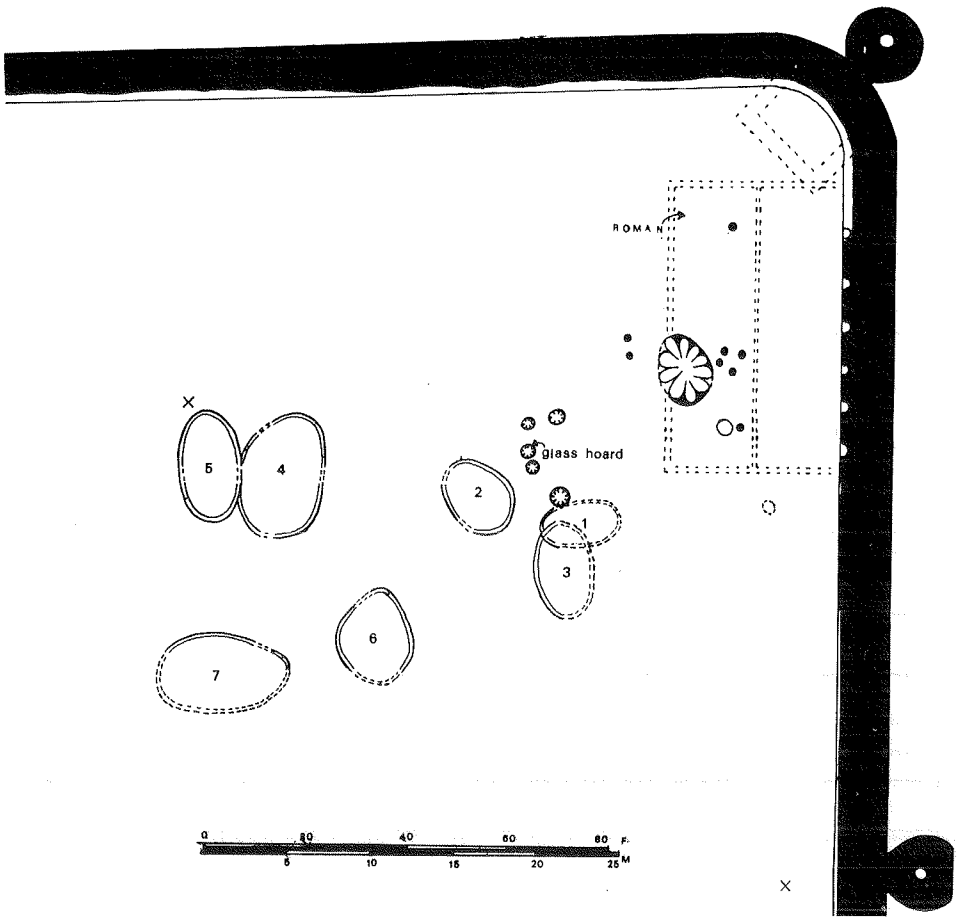

Figure 1b. Burgh Castle (Suffolk); 1960, after Charles Green.

that they were 'wattle and daub bee-hives'. There were traces of carbonised wood adjacent, but no evidence for post holes, although there were flint packings on either side of the slots. It is curious that the post-Roman builders did not utilize the Roman stone around, but if they transplanted their own traditions, then in form and dimensions these can be compared with the round ended wattle and plaster building at Monkwearmouth, or the similar timber structure at Tynemouth. As Professor O'Kelly has pointed out to me there is an Irish parallel for this hut type in structure A which he excavated at Knockea, Co Limerick (1967, 86, fig. 7).

The material which came out with the Burgh Castle huts can be only tentatively interpreted at this stage. However, I can say that no evidence for literacy - one of the normal hall-marks of a monastic site has been found. Indeed no inscriptions have been found on the site, although other small artifacts similar to those found on Irish monastic sites have survived. Hut 2 produced a quantity of worked antler tines, as well as a spindle whorl and bronze key, while Hut 5 could well be a smithy since this area produced slag fragments, nails, an iron spike, two horse shoes, an iron blade, and two axes. (These finds are possibly from the later Saxon layer.) The post holes which were found to the NE were associated with a clay floor level and a great deal of roughly painted plaster. This Green supposed could have been an indication that the building was a church, but in view of the painted plaster from Monkwearmouth and Jarrow clearly not associated with the church, this could be one of the other major buildings of the monastery. This would leave the church in the S of the site associated with the cemetery.

We turn now to the Northumbrian monasteries, of which very few which can be dated to the period of strongest impact by the Celtic church have been archaeologically investigated. Part of the headland site at Tynemouth (NZ 374695) was, however, investigated by George Jobey in 1963. In early records it is sometimes difficult to disentangle references to this site on the N bank and South Shields on the S bank of the Tyne. It may be noted how Jarrow, which is founded a generation later, has to fit in the interstices of this monastic network. Bede mentions the monastery (HE, V, 6) so it was in existence by the eighth century. But if one can accept a later tradition (Miscellanea Biographica, Surtees Society, 1838, II) that King Oswin was buried there, then it was founded by 651.

Before the 1963 excavations (Jobey, 1967, 33-104) the only indications of the pre-Conquest monastery were two crosses and two cross-heads of the ninth and tenth centuries, one of which, 'The Monk's Stone', possibly stood

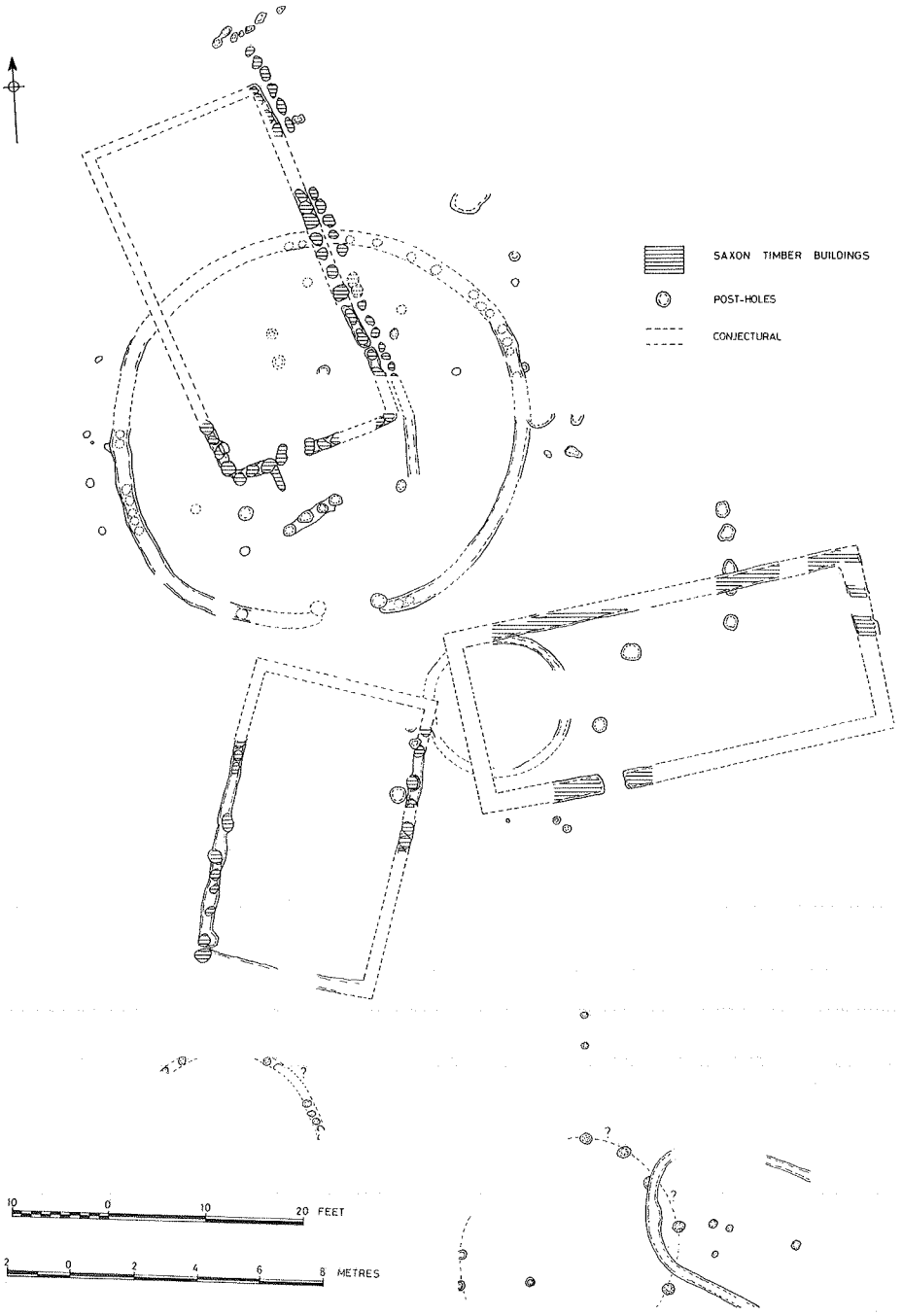

Figure 2. Timber Buildings, Tynemouth (Northumberland); after George Jobey.

on the outskirts of the monastic cemetery and the other fragment, in the University Museum Newcastle, was perhaps from the cemetery. Two other fragments were discovered in the course of the excavation. Mr Jobey's excavation took place in the winter months in advance of lowering the level of the modern road on the N side of the Priory church. A sequence of occupation from the Iron Age to the sixteenth century defences was recorded.

Four timber buildings were discovered which are tentatively assigned by the excavator to a period between the second century Roman occupation and the construction of the Norman church (Fig. 2). Building 1 (Jobey, 1967, 42-3) was situated in the cemetery of the church partially overlaid by one of the foundations of the Norman piers, the area had been disturbed to below the potential floor level of the building and the outline was indicated by a shallow groove 9 in wide and with a maximum of 6 in depth cut into the bedrock. The structure was aligned roughly ESE/WNW, had a semi-circular W end and fairly straight sides. Its internal width was 14 ft.

Building 2 (Jobey, 1967, 43) was situated under the medieval byre and aligned approximately SSE/NNW. No floor levels had survived. 'The irregularly formed construction trenches showed the remains of post-impressions for close-set uprights of timber walls'. The SW corner with its projecting post probably indicates that the timbers had not been squared off. A narrow doorway with the shallow trench for shelter-screen on its W side placed off-centre was in the S wall. Two conjoining sherds of second century Roman coarse pottery were found in the bottom packing of two of the post holes to the E of the doorway. Its internal width was 17 ft and length probably about 30 ft. Building 3 (Jobey, 1967, 44) was under the sacristy. Although on a slightly different alignment (NNE/SSW), it was of the same type of construction as 2, with irregular post-impressions. An undecorated sherd of samian was sealed in the packing of the wall trench. The excavator considered the building had been dismantled. Its internal width was 17 ft and its length though uncertain must have been between 26 ft and 31 ft.

Building 4 (Jobey, 1967, 45-6). This building which may have been separated from 2 and 3 by a boundary fence was constructed in a different technique with continuous trenches for sill beams. The excavator considered that there were signs of systematic dismantling of the buildings. At least one off-centre doorway had existed in its S wall. This building cut through the Romano-British material and was earlier than the medieval pathways and sacristy. Two fragments of second-century pottery were found in the packing

used to level the sill beams in their trenches. Its alignment was approximately E-W. Its internal width was 16 ft and its length possibly about 39 ft.

These timber buildings, as Jobey is at pains to point out, could be of any date from the Roman to the Norman period. Individual buildings can be compared with Irish sites such as Knockea, and other English sites such as Wearmouth or Hartlepool. However these buildings show obvious parallels to Anglo-Saxon domestic structures, both in dimensions and building techniques (Addyman, 1972, 273-307). Moreover there were few finds which provided evidence of Anglo-Saxon occupation let alone monastic occupation, save for a stycca of Ethelred II (AD 841-4).

The archaeological evidence from Hartlepool (NZ 527338) presents similar problems. The monastery, which was also on a peninsula site, was an establishment for women. Here under the patronage of St Aidan, Heiu, the first woman religious to found a house in Northumbria, established herself c.646 (Bede, HE, IV, 23). She was succeeded by Hild c.650, and after that the history of the establishment is obscure. Before recent excavations the site of the monastic cemetery had been established by the discovery in 1833-4 of a number of bodies aligned N-S and associated with inscribed name stones (for the most complete bibliography of these stones, Okasha, 1971, 75-6). This cemetery was to the SE of the existing parish church and in 1972 excavation immediately to the S of the church also uncovered an early medieval burial ground although no convincing date has yet been assigned to it.

In 1968, a large area to the N of St Hilda's church was mechanically cleared for redevelopment, and extensive remains of ditches and timber slots, some of which appeared to be circular, were noted by myself and others. A small area about 60 ft by 80 ft was investigated by a group from the Department of Archaeology, Durham. Underlying the yard and back buildings of a medieval house which was occupied from fourteenth - fifteenth century was a thick layer of sand containing pottery dating from the eleventh - fourteenth centuries, and cut into the bedrock below were the remains of four or five trench-built timber houses and three of individual post constructions. One measured about 17 ft 6 in internally, but no total house plans were recovered, and no floor levels had survived. However, there was a scattering of pre-Conquest pottery, and two Saxon rubbish pits yielded pottery and an intermediate loom weight (Medieval Archaeol, XIII (1969), 231). The same difficulty as at Tynemouth was felt in assigning these houses to a religious context. They could have been part

of the vicus of the monastery. The artifacts discovered are not specifically connected with monastic activities such as the production of manuscripts, or fine metalwork, and contrast markedly with the finds from Hild's second foundation at Whitby, Yorkshire (NZ 904115).

This seems to be the site known to Bede and his contemporaries as Streanaeshealh, a female establishment or 'double monastery' founded in 657 (HE, IV, 23). This was a site specifically associated with the Northumbrian royal house, and the finds testify to the wealth and external contacts of the establishment until its abandonment in the ninth century. This is still the most extensively excavated monastic site in Northumbria, and it is unfortunate that the excavations took place under such uncontrolled conditions. It seems to have been excavated by remotely supervised Ministry of Works workmen who maintained a record of the finds but little else. The account of the 1920-5 excavation, as summarized by Sir Charles Peers, was published in 1943 (Peers and Radford, 1943). No proper account exists of the area explored, but a record of the finds and a gridded outline of the site are extant in the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities, British Museum. The excavation report of the structures discovered follows a model constructed from the scanty documentary evidence for the site and Bede's account of Coldingham (HE, IV, 25). The excavators assumed that the church of St Peter occupied the middle of the monastic precinct. The N part of this area only was discussed although it had been noted that to the S of the medieval church were pre-Conquest buildings. 'The outer parlour is of late twelfth century date, and beneath it, at a different angle to any other building was some rough stone foundations laid in clay and bits of fire-reddened clay from a wattle and daub construction. These walls once recognised occurred in front of the west end of the church, and were followed up on the north side till the greater part of the available area had been explored' (Peers and Radford, 1943, 29). No termination of the buildings was found on the N - a fact supported by Rahtz's 1958 excavations. The solitary site drawing which appears in the published report is difficult and confusing to assess. Philip Rahtz has however redrawn the plan more clearly, leaving out the demonstrably post-Conquest features and lettering the buildings. A full account of this re-interpretation of the plan will appear elsewhere but I am grateful to him for allowing me to use his drawing here (Fig. 3). I use his letterings of the buildings. In the area which Peers gives as 300 ft E-W and 200 ft N-S he states: 'Plans of seven buildings have been recovered and there is evidence of the former existence of many more'. Two structures A and B, (Fig. 3) measured approximately 18 ft E-W by 11 ft N-S. A stone hearth shows that there was a fire in the E half of the

house and suggests a living room 11 ft square with a bedroom to the SW and a lavatory to the NW. Two other structures, C and D,were also considered of the same type, but to the N, the rectangular building E which measured internally 47 ft by 19 ft, was tentatively thought to be a 'guesthouse or merely a storehouse.'

The L-shaped building to the SW was divided into two rooms, the northern G1, 21 ft by 11 ft, the southern, G2, 20 ft by 11 ft. At the east end of G2 was 'a large stone hearth divided into two sections 3 ft wide by 3 ft long suggesting that this was an industrial building, perhaps a smithy'. This interpretation was not borne out by the distribution of the finds from that area which included mainly loomweights and styli. The excavators found no clue to the function of building F, which was 19 ft square.

A vallum enclosure is also marked on the original published plan and its line is confirmed by a row of small wells. However, study of the finds-register of the site and a gridded plan 126/32A 1 dated 1920 leads one to suppose a much more complicated picture than the published evidence suggests. It seems clear that there were several building periods on the site and changes of use in structures which can be isolated from the mass of debris. The so-called 'vallum' did not confine the Saxon occupation of the site, although it is not clear whether occupation spread through an early enclosure. However, there is no difference in the type of find discovered E and W of the 'vallum'.

The area between the W wall of the present N transept and the W wall of the nave clearly seems to have been a focus of important Saxon burials. (The locateable inscriptions are all recorded as being found in this area.) Building D seems to have been built over part of the existing burial ground and there are several references to finds occurring 'below the Saxon paving'.

The building layout of Whitby shows a peculiarly dense occupation in which buildings are laid out in rows possibly, as indicated by Rahtz on his plan, along a main E-W road. However, they are subdivided into small units some of which are self-contained. It has not been possible to do a finds distribution map which covers the whole area, but the wealth of finds contrasts very markedly with all other English monastic sites which have been archaeologically examined.

There are not significantly different distributions of evidence for one to say that certain buildings had specific functions. In fact they seem to have

THE SAXON MONASTERY AT WHITBY

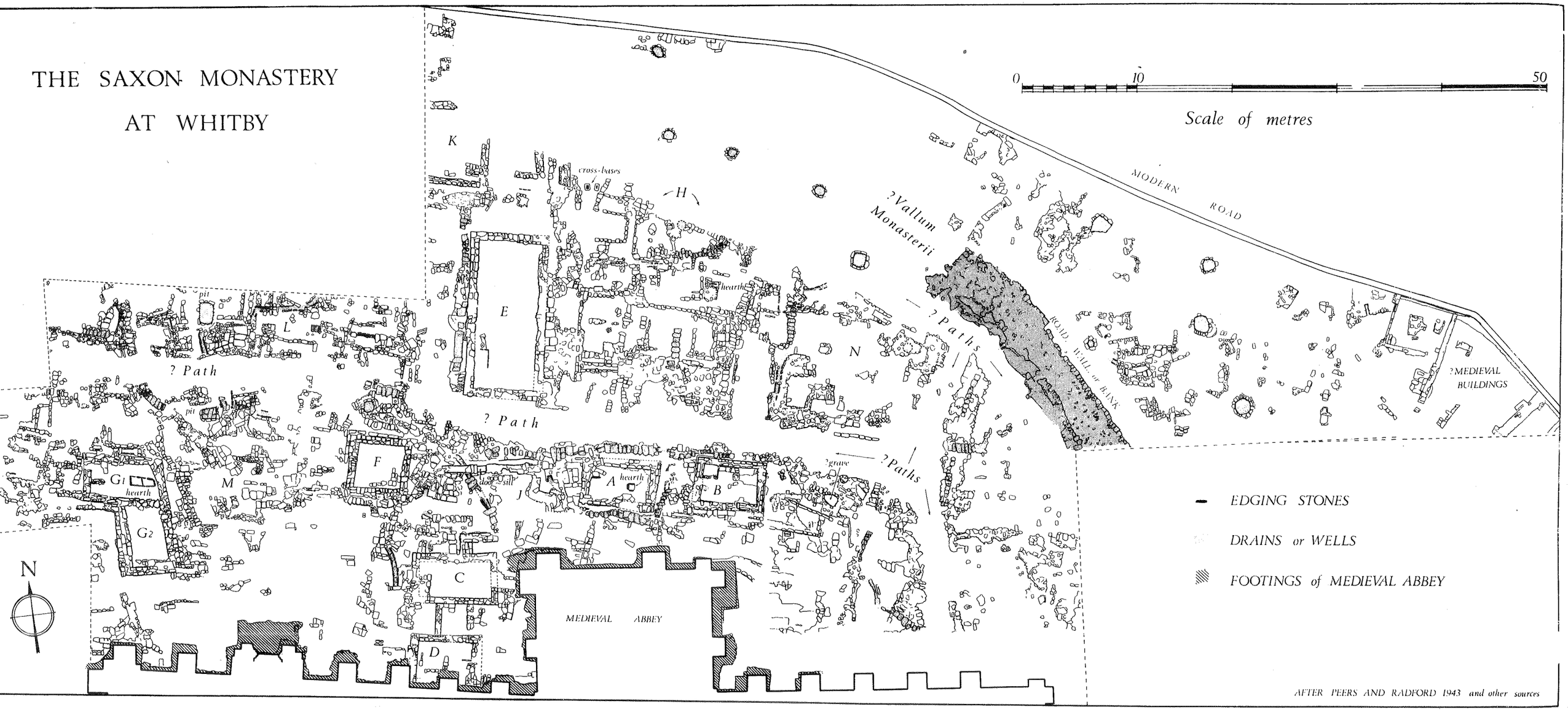

Figure 3.

had mixed functions. This would not militate against the idea that they were cells for one or more of the female religious. The wealth of hair pins and evidence of spinning and weaving renders this area almost certainly one of female occupancy. Nevertheless the buildings, with the exception of W3, could have been set aside for the daily activity of the sisters without their having been used as cells for living, sleeping and eating. In size they compare with the private suite in building B at Jarrow (see below). The wealth of the Whitby community is to be seen not only in the massive number of coins from the site, but also the large amount of imported pottery which must have been paid for. There is too much from this site to be accounted,for as one might account for the glazed bowl from Jarrow or fragments from Monkwearmouth, as gifts from friends abroad.

These houses so far discussed were founded when the Northumbrian church was still predominantly under the influence of the Irish church. However, female establishments such as Whitby were probably also influenced by continental ideas, either acquired by direct contacts or through East Anglia. Hild had originally intended to follow the monastic life in Gaul, and had spent a year in East Anglia before she had undertaken any of her monastic foundations. The limited archaeological work undertaken on these early Northumbrian monasteries is hardly sufficient to show whether or not there were analogies with Irish sites. On the Northumbrian sites, however, where there have been the most recent and extensive excavations, we know from literary sources that their founders intended that they should create a new model which would reflect directly the glories of the antique Roman church in the West.

At Monkwearmouth, the excavation was undertaken from Durham University as a rescue dig in advance of the clearing of buildings to the south of St Peter's Church, and after small scale test holes in 1959 there have been so far eight seasons of excavation, although in two seasons only a limited amount of ground was opened. This is an urban site in which very little early stratification survives. But it appears to have been an elevated site with good communications by river and sea, although not enclosed naturally. No trace of an artificial boundary can now be seen in such a landscape. A scattering of Roman finds has been found in the general area of the river mouth and before the current excavations a runic gravestone of the ninth century had been discovered south of the church. The present church of St Peter's incorporates a Saxon west wall and one storey porch in rubble construction, and a late Saxon west tower of coursed stone.

Bede, who began his monastic life here at the age of seven, records (HE, IV, 23) that St Hilda had c. 648 a monastery of one hide on the N bank of the Wear, before she went to Hartlepool, but we do not know where that was. However, the founding of the major monastery is fully recorded by Bede: Benedict Biscop, a young Northumbrian noble, was granted seventy hides of royal land on which to build a monastery in 673, and in 674 he sent to friends in Gaul for masons to build a stone church in the Roman manner. This was completed in a year. When it was nearly finished he again sent to Gaul for glaziers to glaze the windows of the church, its adjuncts, and the refectories. Bede also records two other churches besides St Peter's and 'many oratories', as well as a dormitory. It seems to have been envisaged as a fully communal life, although the abbot and some senior monks had cells (Cramp, 1969, 22-3).

When the second foundation at Jarrow was begun in 682 this was considered as part of the same monastery. Its land grant was smaller - forty hides - and it seems to have been built by the English brethren twenty-two of whom were sent from Wearmouth, ten lay and twelve monks. In the third year from the foundation they began to build a church dedicated to St Paul, and it was consecrated in 685. In 716 there were six hundred monks in the dual establishment. Both monasteries seem to have ceased to function in the ninth century.

The earliest feature on the site at Monkwearmouth seems to be a Christian cemetery (Fig. 4) although I would like to stress that I have had no radio-carbon dating on the bodies and have not yet had the full report on the skeletons from Dr Calvin Wells. The cemetery is much confused by later Saxon burials, distinguishable by their lesser depth and the Saxon debris in their graves. At the lowest level the bodies are buried in clean sand or clay, and two graves contained sherds of Roman pottery. The line of these early burials, of men, women and children, is clearly visible to the W of B which may have been sited in relation to them, but in other places they are overlaid by what I would consider as Saxon monastic buildings. No early burials have been found inside B or D but there are early graves scattered to the east of B, all of which so far identified are male.

Building D which is markedly off alignment with the church and cut by wall VI is 13 ft wide. Its walls survived as two foundation courses of flattish clay-bonded stones, and it had no trace of mortar superstructure. It might like the Whitby buildings, have carried a timber superstructure. It had gone out of use by the thirteenth century at the latest, but possibly it had been demolished earlier since one sherd of Saxon pottery overlaid its S wall.

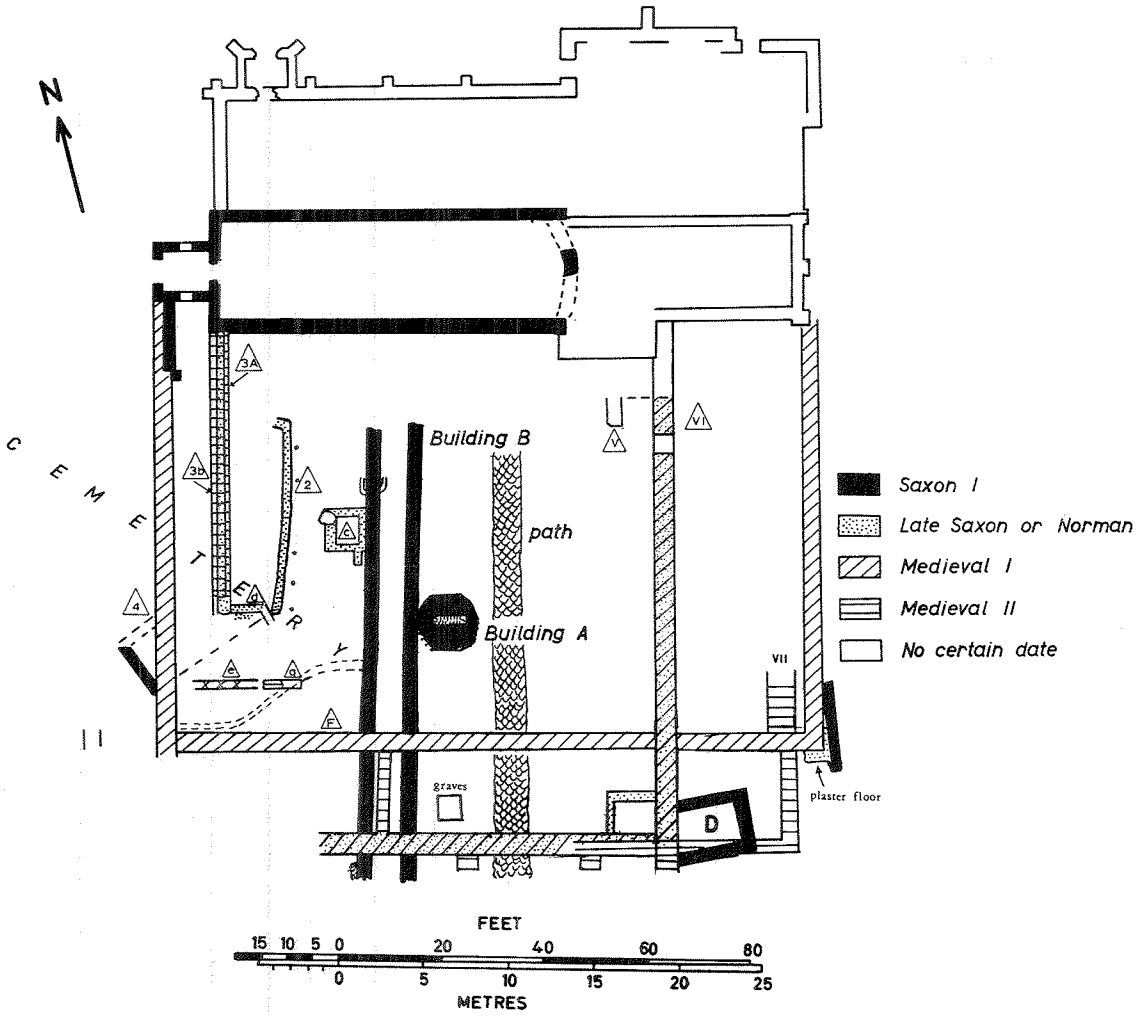

Figure 4. Monkwearmouth (Co Durham); reconstructed general plan, 1971.

Its destruction in the pre-Norman period, however, depends on the dating of wall VI to which I return later.

Also of the earliest monastic phase is the long gallery-like building (B), which has now been traced for 105 ft S of the church and is still running S. It is 10 ft wide, with walls less than 2 ft thick formed of angled rubble, clay-bonded for two foundation courses and mortared above. This is the construction of the early phase of the church which also has in its core the same creamy yellow mortar. Building B had been faced internally and externally with plaster, again like the church, and seems to have had a series of openings, since within its destruction level and the late Saxon graves which had cut it, a great deal of window glass was found as well as fragments of carved balusters. A distribution plan of the glass from the site shows a concentration on either side of this building, as well as glass mounts and vessels which are found between it and the primary cobbled path (Cramp, 1969, 36-7).

Attached to this building was building A the concrete floor of which survived faced with a skim of powdered brick. The floor was sunk about 1 ft into the Saxon ground surface, and had carried a superstructure formed of wattles and plaster, the main stake holes of which still survived in the curved ends. They were 1 in across and set at about 1 ft intervals. Nine burials had cut through the floor of this small building which measured 12 ft by 10 ft 6 in and underneath them all there was a hole and a few disturbed bones. There was, however, a smooth rounded niche in the W end, which may indicate that this was constructed for a primary burial (Cramp, 1969, 34-6, fig. 15). One is reminded of the concrete tombs of the early archbishops of Canterbury but this is obviously a building which was meant to be entered since the floor was so well finished and I would think that it is derived from a type of late Roman martyrium. A similar patch of mortar flooring survives cut by the return of the medieval S range. Further S and in line with A an area of specially marked graves was found in 1971. The burials were of an elderly man and a youth. We could therefore think that in the earliest monastic phase, B bordered an open space used as a monastic cemetery with associated shrines and chapels. In a later but still pre-Norman phase a sunken structure was added to B, its association being lost since it was cut through by a medieval fence line. It could be a latrine or well house and it was filled in in the thirteenth century, having been previously used as a rubbish pit.

More puzzling, however, is the relationship between B and walls F and H.

Wall VI and Wall H, Fig. 4, must be considered as part of the same structure, since they were bonded and of the same type of construction with limestone blocks set at varying angles, with a distinctive bright creamy yellow mortar which penetrated right into the foundations. The only distinction was that H had disturbed Saxon facing-mortar low in the foundations and had obviously been reshaped and strengthened immediately to the E of its junction with B. In the angle between VI and H was a sunken feature 7 ft by 5 ft 6 in internally, 8 ft by 10 ft externally. Its N and W walls were constructed of well finished ashlar blocks of a type not found anywhere else on the site, on the S and E the face of the walls had been lined with clay. The interior was clean and had no outlet. This feature had been filled with clean rubble and sand debris, and in this debris was discovered a group of small charred stake holes associated with eleventh-century shell-gritted pottery. It is possible that if the sunken feature, which is tentatively interpreted as an external strong-room, was destroyed in the Norman replanning of the site, that H was rebuilt at that time, thus accounting for the Saxon facing-mortar within the wall trench.

The problem, however, if H is part of a pre-Conquest building, is to know whether we have the N or the S wall of a building. It clearly cuts across the first period path, but careful investigation of the foundations of this wall at its junction with B showed bonding in. This same phenomenon had been noted in 1969, in the first period of building of part of Wall F although obviously that wall line had been rebuilt in two subsequent phases. The E wall of B had also been thickened at its junction with H.

The southern adjuncts to H are butt-jointed against it and between II and IV was a mortar floor which was later than the fourteenth century but earlier than the seventeenth. At some stage B no longer functioned as part of F/H and a new wall was inserted which was overlaid by an eighteenth-century cellar.

No explanation at present covers satisfactorily the pre-Dissolution sequence of buildings between VI and the W section of the trench. The best working hypothesis which can be created is as follows. Period 2: one or possibly two buildings were attached to the gallery building B. These were built in the same technique as B but were wider and possibly supported a two storey structure. In the Norman period (period 3) these buildings were reshaped into a S range and an E range was built to create an orthodox plan.

The long gallery looks back to one storey corridors linking two major

building-lines in Roman buildings and forward to the cloisters of the later Benedictine monasteries. This site has produced buildings regularly aligned on the church whose quality of construction is reminiscent of Roman work: the plaster, decorative stone-carving, coloured window-glass, lead roofing associated with these buildings all indicate the re-introduction of an advanced technology. However, the sunken floored shrine is reminiscent of the timber buildings with rounded ends at Knockea and Tynemouth and is not unlike a sunken Saxon hut translated into a half understood Roman idiom. Moreover, the dominating position of the cemetery and its shrines is perhaps reminiscent of Celtic monasteries, and the irregularly placed stone buildings such as D remind one of Whitby.

Jarrow, founded, as we have seen, ten years later, is on a similar elevated site; by a harbour, and with a river to the S, although here there is much more limited ground. Roman coins, inscriptions and pottery have been gathered in the past from the immediate environs of the site, and as late as the eighteenth century, 'Roman buildings were noted to the north of the church'. These could have been Saxon since all stone buildings would at that date have been considered Roman. There is a persistent tradition of a nearby Roman site, although so far excavation has not revealed it.

One previous excavation before mine has taken place to the N of the church - in advance of the building of a Verger's cottage in the churchyard. This was undertaken by Dr Ralegh Radford (1954, 205-9). Radford's investigation revealed no early stratification on the site. However, he found some cobbled foundations about 13 ft in width lying below disturbed topsoil, which he interpreted as the monastic vallum. The enclosure, as drawn, is very close to the E end of the Saxon church line, an area where there might have appeared room for expansion. However if it had swung to the E after the point at which Radford discovered it we could have missed it in our excavations further S. It is of crucial importance to attest this vallum over a wider area because it provides, other than the doubtful evidence of Whitby, a feature which is a commonplace in Irish monasteries and for which there is abundant literary evidence in Anglo-Saxon England. (The best account of the field evidence for the monastic vallum in Britain is to be found in Thomas, 1971, 27-47).

The churches on the site (Cramp, 1969, 44-5 and Taylor and Taylor, 1965, 338-48) stood in the midst of the monastic complex if the tradition communicated to Leland is correct: namely that Bede's cell was on the N side of the church. Eight seasons of excavation on the site from 1963-1973 have revealed

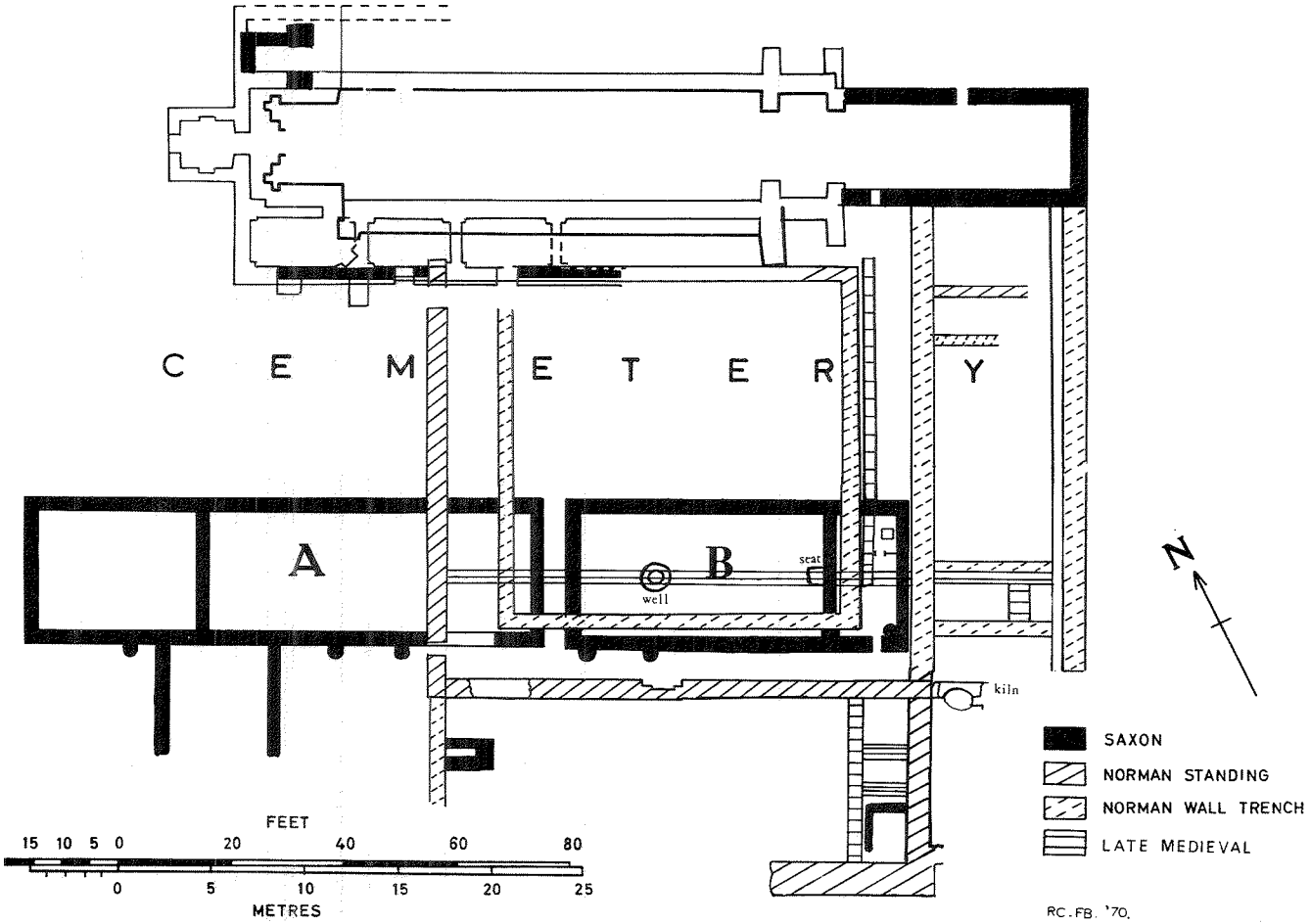

Figure 5. Jarrow (Co Durham), 1971.

something of the monastic layout to the S of the church line. The earliest feature on the site seems to be a burial ground immediately to the S of the churches (Fig. 5). In the area between the churches and A and B, the bodies seem to be aligned on the churches, and their pre-Conquest character is proved by the clean fill of their graves and the fact that they are cut by both the Norman cloister walls and late Saxon timber buildings. In an area to the E of building B were burials aligned more NNE/SSW. In these burials the bodies survived merely as shadows but three of them contained beads, and this could indicate an earlier lay cemetery on the E of the site. The existence of this burial ground could explain the eccentric relationship of the E end of building B and the E end of the church. Buildings A and B were roughly on the same axis separated by a flagged path 3 ft 6 in wide. Building A which measured 91 ft 6 in by 26 ft externally had originally been divided into a small room at the W and a large room to the E. The larger room seems to have been further subdivided by a carved octagonal column, the base of which survived in the opus signinum floor of the building (Cramp, 1969, 45-50). At some stage during the life of the building the dividing wall had been removed and a large drain inserted through the room the flagged capping of which had been covered by a thin spread of red tile chippings and clay (Cramp, 1969, fig. 19). In 1973 excavation of some wattle huts to the S of A produced a pile of Roman roof and flue tiles with beside them a pile of small chippings and clay of the type used in the floor patching.

The drain ran through the S wall of the building into a southern annexe which has not yet been fully excavated. The annexe floor was partially paved and was at a lower level than the floor of the main room. It is assumed that the southern annexe was added after the demolition of the party wall in A, although it was not possible to prove this since the junction was at foundation level only. Three irregularly placed buttresses supported the S wall of A. It is possible in view of the solid construction of the walls that this was a two-storeyed building. The structure was faced internally with a creamy plaster, its northern windows were of coloured glass and the southern of colourless. Its roof was of small stone roofing-slates and lead flashing and the building was surrounded by a shallow eavesdrip drain. The building had clearly been destroyed by fire and the destruction debris had never been cleared from its eastern end. In the western sector of the building, however, there was less evidence of burning and the floor was comparatively clean. It is assumed that this building could have been a refectory (Cramp, 1969, 49-50).

Building B measured 60 ft by 26 ft externally and had been subdivided into

three rooms. The largest measured 43 ft by 21 ft internally and had the setting for a seat in the middle of its E wall, and a small water hole, 4 ft 6 in deep at its W end. The E section of the building consisted of two rooms measuring 11 ft by 7 ft and 14 ft by 11 ft internally. They were divided by a grooved stone which probably held a wooden screen. The northern-most had an opus signinum floor and inset into this a centrally placed stone perhaps for an altar. The S room, which was entered from a door in the S wall, had a partially paved floor, and a sink or wash place in the corner. The windows of the building had been glazed with plain and coloured glass. It was clear that the building had burnt down: the floor area of the largest room had been disturbed in the medieval period, but there was a large quantity of burnt wood and melted lead, and the internal wall plaster was blackened. Finds in this room included a stylus, a pin with ring and dot head and a small whetstone. The floors of the smaller rooms, which had been protected from later disturbance by the walk of the medieval cloister, were thickly covered with ash. It would appear that we have what in a later Benedictine monastery would be the E range, with the large room serving as a place for assembly and writing; the private suite perhaps used by the Abbot or a senior monk. We have therefore a type of 'cell' composed of oratory and living room like St Cuthbert's on Farne, combined with a public room for communal use. This building is comparable with the large secular halls of the period (Addyman, 1972, 284-5).

The solid Roman looking stone buildings on the upper terrace at Jarrow were like the timber 'halls' of the secular world supplemented by small huts of post, or stake, construction, the floor platforms of which were cut into the slope between A and B and the stream to the S. One such hut floor excavated in 1963 (Cramp, 1969, 52, fig. 22) yielded evidence for glass working in the shape of a millefiori rod and glass stag as well as a coin of Eanbald (AD 796-830). In 1973 a line of wattle huts was found further S. These also provided evidence for the glass working of millefiori rods and beads. The work at Monkwearmouth and Jarrow is still not finished, but so far it is clear that they will not provide 'type sites' for the Northumbrian monastery.

In summary, the evidence we have so far accululated in Northern England as a basis for the discussion of types of monastic settlement is still woefully inadequate. First no clearly eremetic site such as St Cuthbert's cell on Farne has been thoroughly archaeologically investigated. The sites I have mentioned, with the exception of Hartlepool, could all have been near centres of population and on previously occupied sites. No foundation has

been excavated such as Lindisfarne or Melrose which could be linked with the Columban tradition before it had been affected by contacts with the continent, in particular Gaul. One double house, Whitby, has been extensively dug, and here interpretation of the plan is obscured by poorly recorded building sequences. However, there is evidence of orderly planning, and a living unit which can be compared with both contemporary domestic timber buildings and the cell attached to building B at Jarrow. The royal connections of Whitby rather than its female element probably produced the wealth of finds. These are not only personal possessions, such as pins, brooches, rings, of which women may have had more than men, but also coinage, imported and local pottery, metal vessels, writing implements and tools. Although we might expect to find evidence of spinning and weaving in a double house, and metal working and glass making in a male establishment, we must remember that it is impossible to compare the area of workrooms and cells at Whitby with the cemetery and large public buildings of Wearmouth or Jarrow.

The differences of layout at Wearmouth and Jarrow may be possibly due to their relative size and the differences in the terrain on each site. It may be that at Wearmouth we are only just reaching the large buildings on the same axis as the church as at Jarrow. However, it is clear from these two houses, founded within ten years of each other and under the same abbot, that in the late seventh century the Northumbrians were still experimenting with the monastic plan and were not unaffected by native lay traditions of building in wood, possibly even by earlier stone structures. The robbing of Roman buildings was no doubt instructive as well as destructive.

If the Rule does not, in present evidence, seem to have predetermined a building plan it does seem to have affected the economy. The wealth of these houses, which must have been considerable, was reflected in their buildings and no doubt also in their church metalwork and manuscripts. These reflected the aspiration of the community to belong to the antique Christian world. The small finds from Wearmouth/Jarrow show a marked lack of personal possessions - a stylus, a portable whetstone or a plumb bob. Moreover the food debris is remarkable in contrast with the later medieval levels - there are very few animal bones - almost all are fish bones, in particular local shell fish. The enormous difference in ideology between the aristocratic lay society with its emphasis on personal wealth as signifying status, and the monastic family where personal wealth was rejected does have its peculiar effect on the archaeological record of this type of densely occupied site, whether it be a Celtic or English monastery.

One may remember that when Bede divided up his possessions on his death bed they were pepper, incense and napkins. The difficulties of archaeological retrieval of such exotic and fugitive substances will always leave half the story untellable, even if the buildings on any one site could be fully examined.

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