

A CIRCULAR ROMAN TEMPLE  
DISCOVERED IN THE LATE  
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY AT  
CANTERBURY

WILLIAM URRY

There must be very many records of archaeological discoveries awaiting disinterment from the papers of deceased antiquaries. The rich manuscript deposits at Canterbury offer more than one instance.

We are concerned at the moment with a narrative recounting the discovery of foundations of a Roman shrine\* within the city, set out in a memorandum dated 1700, preserved in the Cathedral Library, among the voluminous papers of Edward Hasted.<sup>1</sup> The Historian of Kent accumulated masses of materials for his great compilation, but did not fully exploit them all. By and large the different items among his collected notes may be recognized in a digested form in the folio edition of his *History of Kent* (1777–1799), and in a more abbreviated version in the octavo edition (1797–1801). However, it becomes evident that space could not be found for some of Hasted's discoveries, and the account of the shrine lies among such unused items.<sup>2</sup>

\* But could it, in fact, be the *laconicum* of the public baths of Canterbury (see, for example, R. G. Collingwood and I. A. Richmond, *The Archaeology of Roman Britain*, 1969, 112–4 and Figs. 38 and 40)? This structure in Jewry Lane (White Horse Lane) is about 200 ft. away from the probable *caldarium* (currently being excavated by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust in the Marlowe Car Park) and when compared with, for example, the public baths at Wroxeter this would fit very well. Also, circular Romano-Celtic temples are never as small as c. 16 ft. in diameter. I am grateful to Mr. T. Tatton-Brown for this information.

<sup>1</sup> MS. U 11, *sine numero*. Another archaeological discovery (of pottery of early date found opposite St. Anselm's chapel in the Cathedral Precincts), is to be found illustrated in MS. Lit. A 1 (the Austin sketch book).

<sup>2</sup> Mr. J. Boyle, F.S.A., is currently working on Hasted's notes and tells me that the quarto edition all through omits very large amounts of material to be found in the folio edition.

The memorandum which stands in the handwriting of Edward Hasted himself, is clearly a copy of an earlier original set out in somewhat archaic language, where the text has been altered to a certain degree by Hasted for printing. The account purports to record a discovery made 'in the year 1639', when excavation was in progress for a cellar in Jewry Lane, Canterbury. The diggers found a circular or oval foundation, carried out in brick, of a temple clearly forming the focus of some cult, and judged from the number of votive offerings lying around, the centre of a pagan pilgrimage to Canterbury. The name Jewry Lane was still applied into the eighteenth century both to the present Jewry Lane running east – west into Stour Street, and to the section now called White Horse Lane running north – south from the High Street to the 'elbow', as William Gostling calls it, where it joins the present Jewry Lane.<sup>3</sup>

The date '1639' may be called in question, for Archdeacon John Battely (author of *Antiquitates Rutupinae*, and a member of the family of antiquaries), is said to have inspected the 'dig'. Since his term of office stretched from 1688 until his death in 1708, we are inclined to guess that Hasted misread a date in the original of 1689. In such case the record (dated 1700) would have been put together eleven years after the discovery, accounting for the imprecise recollections occasionally noted.

To identify the author of the memorandum is difficult indeed. Had we the original, then handwriting would have helped. The compiler is clearly a man of classical education, but in an area so well-populated with clergy and country gentlemen, this will hardly narrow the field. One or two names can probably be eliminated, such as that of Nicholas Battely the antiquary, brother to the Archdeacon. In 1703, Nicholas Battely brought out a new edition of William Somner's *Antiquities of Canterbury*, adding thereto his own *Cantuarria Sacra*. He incorporated in the volume a reprint of Somner's pamphlet *Chartham Bones*, setting out the discovery at that village in 1668 of great bones, identified by Somner as those of an *equus fluvialis* or hippopotamus. To the reprint were appended *Reflections upon Chartham News*, clearly added by Battely, giving an account of discoveries of Roman remains around central Canterbury. Had Nicholas Battely been present at the excavation in Jewry Lane, then it seems highly improbable that he would have failed to mention it, especially as he discussed finds in Lamb Lane (now Stour Street) and St. Margaret's Street, very close by. Yet again it is puzzling that he, who was Vicar of Bekesbourne (so close at hand), from 1685 until his death in 1705, should have said nothing in the *Reflections* about the disclosure of the shrine in Jewry

<sup>3</sup> *A Walk in and about the City of Canterbury*, ed. 2, 1777, 51.

## A ROMAN TEMPLE IN CANTERBURY

Lane, all the more so since his own brother observed it and offered an opinion upon it. Nicholas Battely was certainly not apathetic about archaeological finds, for even after his text had gone off to the press in London, he sent up some last-minute notes of further discoveries, dated 30th July, 1703.

The compiler of the memorandum upon the temple seems to have had some contact with, or with the circle of, (Sir) John Lewis of Leedstone in Yorkshire (*d.* 1677). This wealthy merchant and trade-emissary to Persia and India, acquired curiosities there, some of which came to the compiler of the note on the temple. Lewis was among those knighted at The Hague by Charles II in 1660, just before his return from exile. Since the note states that the compiler had received specimens from Mr. Lewis, later Sir John, it may be supposed that this contact dated from before the concession of knighthood.<sup>4</sup>

The diggers in Jewry Lane at Canterbury were engaged in making a cellar some 28 × 30 ft. as the record below shows. Three feet and more below the surface they encountered the first of their finds, coming across a great scatter of votive offerings at the shrine, in the shape of medallions and coins, some of gold, many of silver, with a multitude of brass and copper, the coins stretching from the 'upper Empire' down to Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161–180), with the exclusion of Otho, the shortness of whose reign (in A.D. 69) could account for the absence of coinage. Clearly, the Canterbury shrine was a centre of devotion from early days of the Roman occupation until late in the second century. Remains of sacrificial animals lay around. It sounds as if the shrine may have been associated with a water deity, since a stream ran beneath it. Some idea of its size may be gained in that its lateral dimensions must have been very close to those of the twelfth-century Water Tower on the north side of the Cathedral, which measures internally 17 ft., a foot more than the internal diameter of the Roman shrine.

Discovery of a number of gold and silver medallions or coins should have been brought to the notice of the Canterbury Coroner, but no record of an inquest of treasure trove is to be found among the relevant papers in the Canterbury City Archives.

The archaeological implications must be left to specialists, but an effort to identify the site is called for. Jewry and White Horse Lanes are certainly an expected site for important Roman remains, lying as they do between the foundations of the great Roman theatre in St. Margaret's Street on the one hand, and the complex of ancient walls and footings lying around the present County Hotel. Jewry Lane and

<sup>4</sup> See Le Neve: *Knights made by King Charles II . . .* [etc.] ed. by G. W. Marshall. (*Harleian Soc.*, VIII, 1873). Lewis later became a baronet. For his large and handsome tomb, see Thoresby: *Leeds*, 1715, 237–8.

White Horse Lane offer together a length of 40 yards. Unfortunately, there has been much destruction here in modern times, done in connection with the post-war scheme (now happily abandoned) for a roadway parallel with the High Street of Canterbury. Two late-seventeenth-century houses which could have qualified for consideration as the site for the temple were demolished c. 1960. One, standing close to the north-western corner at the 'elbow' in the lane, can be eliminated as having a cellar too small for the dimensions indicated, unless the excavations were made larger than the projected dwelling. Another, standing on the north side of Jewry Lane (as now called), exhibited the date 16 1 on its frontage worked in blue brick. If the missing figure had been 9, then it would have been tempting to speculate that here could have been the site. But whether it had a cellar or not is not now to be checked, for the whole area is spread with cinders for a car-park.<sup>5</sup>

But a likely site could well be found round the corner in White Horse Lane as now called. In the yard at the back of the old Fleur de Lys Inn, and to the north of the Salvation Army Temple, Professor Sheppard Frere found a spread of high-grade coloured marble fragments, obviously from a building of luxurious appointment, brought from far-flung corners of the Roman Empire. Could these be associated with the temple, which produced marble 'of divers beautiful and uncommon Colours'?<sup>6</sup>

As noted above, the text as it stands is in Hasted's writing, with some slight modifications of the original made by him for printing. Where possible the text in front of him has been recovered, but Hasted's cancellations were made with great vigour, and it is often difficult to restore the text. Cancellations are noted thus: (British *canc.*) Interlineations made principally by Hasted to make good the text after cancellations are indicated in this manner (people *int.*). The use of majuscule and minuscule letters has been followed as far as possible from Hasted's transcript, but it is sometimes uncertain which form is intended therein.

<sup>5</sup> Photographs of the house near the corner under demolition are in the hands of the writer. The building contained a handsome staircase with spiral bannisters.

<sup>6</sup> The catalogue of materials found in White Horse Lane, Canterbury, sounds like some Marlovian rhapsody, 'Red Porphyry from Egypt . . . Giallo Antico from Algeria or Numidia, Verde Antico from Thessaly, Carrara marble from Italy. . . . (S. S. Frere: *Roman Canterbury* [unpaginated].) The area was laid out as today by the twelfth century. See W. Urry, *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*, map 2b, sheet 5. Occupants of the frontage in the sixteenth century can be traced, such as the incumbent of St. Mary Breadman church, whose house flanked the Windmill alehouse run by John Cranford and his wife Ann (Marlowe), sister of the dramatist.

A ROMAN TEMPLE IN CANTERBURY  
 THE HISTORY OF CANTERBURY ANTIQUITIES FOUND  
 NO 107

*Memorandum anno 1700.* That in the year 1639 [*sic*] being then opening the ground for the making a Kitchen, Cellerings, and a vault for fewell etc under a House then (*two words canc.*) (rebuilding *int.*) in *Jewrie Lane* in *Canty*, were found as followeth *viz.* about 3 feet below the surface of the ground 7 peices of Brass, Saucer like, but shaped exactly like a large Mushroom when grown to be open, having in the middle, underneath, a short shank to rivet (2 *int.*) or fasten (1 *int.*) 'em on,<sup>7</sup> as is supposed, the (s<sup>d</sup> *canc.*) peices were of several Sizes, the largest 3 Inches and  $\frac{1}{2}$ , the least one inch and half *diameter* and were Judged to have been for Ornaments to a horse furniture

After, and about (from *int.*) five (*several words, prob. reading six, seven, eight or canc.*) (to *int.*) nine feet down, and further into the springs, and within the compass of between twenty eight and 30 feet square, (*most of one line canc. prob. reading the Earth . . . . . myself found . . .*) (then being *int.*) found as scattered higher and lower in the Earth, as had happened by their Weight, position, and the lightness, or stiffness of the earth they happened in, (I found *canc. followed by several words, canc.*) between 14, and 1500 *Roman Coins* or *Medals*, and within a Circular foundation, that was within the (sd *canc.*) square, (I found *canc.*) and but little scattered, near 3000 more, being every one of the upper Empire Except *Otho*, and down to *Marcus Antoninus*—a few were of Gold, many of silver, but mostly fine yellow and pale Brass and beautifull Copper, many fair as they came from the mint, but many more, much or wholly imperfect in their reverse and Inscriptions and Exergues. Some peices of plate of odd, and seeming antiquated form or fashion. Some peices of silver and brass rings, three whole of silver, the hoops of them of uncommon size, one of them was more than one Inch and an half over and had on it a small stone much cankered, but stained [sheet 2] stained [*sic*] (like *int.*) some Colour of an Emerald. the other 2 had small stones looking as Rotten dirty Glass, there (being *canc.*) (were *int.*) Multitudes of peices of Urns of different shapes, of the black, and beautifull red Earth, and of the receptacles or dishes they stood in one of which, and in the middle and over which the foot of an Urn undoubtedly stood, was perfect, as when made, the Letters (? *AMICes canc.*) *amica.s.* the peices on the broken edges of some of them plainly shewed (*some words, canc.*) (the then *int.*) profuseness or extravagance of those (persons *canc.*) (people *int.*), there plainly appearing to be intermixt (Gold and silver dust more particularly *int.*) in the Earth, on the working or making of them, as in the red Earth,

<sup>7</sup>The numbers are evidently intended to show that 'rivet' and 'fasten' should be transposed.

gold, and in the finest thin black or blewish urns, silver dust. A little distance from the said square peice of Ground (was *int.*) found a crude or unwrought lump of the red earth, plainly shewing the Composition, (of *canc.*) the red Urns were made of. Three of the small and Course Urns (were *int.*) found whole, their substance and little size having I suppose preserved them from being broke. Several other peices of very thick reddish earthen, and large dishes, (platter size) (were *int.*) found, and which on the upper or inner side were stuck in the Clay, pretty thick small pebbles of a pale reddish Colour, and exactly alike, a great Quantity of such pebles I once saw, and had some of, and which (*word canc.*) (were *int.*) brought from *India* by one *Mr*, but afterwds *sir John Lewis* of *Leedstone* in *Yorkshire* and were termed Ill Coloured Robies. (I found . . . *canc.*) many other small things (were found likewise *int.*) of silver, Brass, Iron, Glass, and of *Wyer*, as *Fibulas*, buttons for the *pretexta* and supposed annulets [*sic, for amulets?*] etc.

The beforementioned Circular, or rather oval foundation was of the Commonly [sheet 3] Called *Roman* or (by some *int.*) *British* (*British canc.*) Bricks or tyles, about 2 Inches thick, 16 inches long, and about 14 broad, and the *diameter* thereof within was 16 feet, and within on the *N.* side thereof, and almost cross to the inside of the Foundation and Coming and passing again under (the Foundation *canc.*) (it *int.*) was a narrow and very low *strata* turned or made in the *s<sup>d</sup>* (*unintelligible word here*) Bricks some whole, but mostly peices, (the? *canc.*) which (being *int.*) broken thro, (and found *canc.*) there (was found *int.*) running within, a very clear Black Water; In the (*s<sup>d</sup> canc.*) foundation was found a Breach or opening about 6 or 7 feet wide lying, I think, but dont perfectly remember, against the *East* and something *South*, supposed to be the entrance thereof. and before, but a little distance from the (*s<sup>d</sup> canc.*) opening, lay in the ground a flat Iron Bar, about an Inch and an half broad, three quarters of an Inch thick, cankered and in some places eat near, or Wholly asunder, and as I traced its lying, seemed to have been 11 or 12 feet long, had on it (as for the getting it up or down) three Iron knobbs, that was covered with Copper whitened over as silver, and which Bar was taken to be proper and belonging to Folding Doors to that Building, of which several peices of Mouldings of marble of divers beautifull and uncommon Colours were found, and also within, but mostly without the (*s<sup>d</sup> canc.*) foundation, (?was, *canc.*) were found the Skulls of 2, supposed Heifers flatt and uncleft with the flatt fronts and short Horns of 3 young Deer, as sores or Sorels, and Boars Tuskes very many. This Building was Curiously surveyed and Considered by the Reverend and Learned Antiquary (Deane? (Archd.) *canc.*) (*Archdeacon int.*) Bately and by him (Understood? *canc.*) (conjectured *int.*) to have been a *Temple* erected to the Goddess *Diana*.