

# SAINT FRIDESWIDE'S MONASTERY AT OXFORD: ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES

*Edited by* JOHN BLAIR

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## Prefatory Note

The remains of St. Frideswide's Priory have received the detailed attention of architectural historians from J.C. Buckler onwards, but have been little discussed in print. Buckler's voluminous notes and sketches of the 1870s have remained unpublished, as have David Sturdy's 1963 excavation and Richard Halsey's comprehensive analysis of the Romanesque building. In 1985, Christopher Scull's excavation in the cloister provided the occasion and the stimulus to bring this material together to form, in conjunction with other studies, an integrated series of reports presenting the data which have been gathered to date and the hypotheses which have been formulated.

These papers are the result of collaboration and fruitful dialogue between the main contributors; the numerous cross-references demonstrate how much they have enriched each other. Nonetheless, they offer diverse and sometimes conflicting interpretations. While a broad consensus has emerged as to the Romanesque phases and the development of the north-eastern chapels, the mid-Saxon origins of the minster, the site of Æthelred II's church and the first buildings of the Augustinian community remain matters of dispute. Prior Robert of Cricklade is the hero of these pages: his architectural transformation of the canons' church and cloister was as thoroughgoing as his literary transformation of their founder-saint's legend, and is even harder to get behind. More excavation must take place before reliable facts can replace informed conjecture, and for elucidating the Anglo-Saxon history of the site these papers are merely a starting-point.

My foremost thanks as editor are to the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church, and to the treasurer Mr. R.P. Benthall, for their financial and moral support, without which the project would certainly have foundered; to Sarah Blair for her unfailing help during this arduous and sometimes stressful task; to Pat Lloyd (as always) for her speedy and accurate typing; and to David Sturdy for generously making available the results of his work of more than two decades ago. All the contributors have assisted my own analysis and interpretation of the evidence, and Roger Ainslie, John Cherry, Brian Durham, Derek Keene, John Maddicott and Christopher Young helped in various ways.

JOHN BLAIR

### RECURRING ABBREVIATIONS

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|------------------------|--|
| B.L.                   | British Library, Dept. of MSS.   |
| Blair, 'St.F.'         | J. Blair, 'St. Frideswide Reconsidered'. <i>Oxonienia</i> , lii (1987), 71-127.  |
| <i>Cart.Frid.</i>      | <i>The Cartulary of the Monastery of St. Frideswide</i> , ed. S.R. Wigram, i-ii (O.H.S. xxviii, xxxi, 1894, 1896).             |
| <i>R.C.H.M. Oxford</i> | <i>An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of Oxford</i> (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 1939).        |
| RG                     | <i>Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum</i> , i-iii, eds. H.W.C. Davis etc. (1913-68).  |
| <i>V.C.H. Oxon.</i>    | <i>The Victoria History of the County of Oxford</i> .  |
| Wood, <i>City</i>      | A. Wood, <i>Survey of the Antiquities of the City of Oxford</i> , ed. A. Clark, i-iii (O.H.S. xv-xvii, xxxvii, 1889-90, 1899). |