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The London Charterhouse: An Urban Charterhouse and its Dissolution

The charterhouse of the Salutation (Annunciation) of Our Lady in London was the first English charterhouse established as a specifically urban foundation, in the immediate environs of a great city – indeed, of the capital city. Previous English carthusian foundations – Witham, Hinton, Beauvale – had all been in isolated rural situations. The charterhouses of Hull and Coventry would soon follow as urban foundations (together with Perth in Scotland), while Axholm would revert to the earlier pattern of rural isolation, and Sheen would be founded away from London, but, as the largest and wealthiest of the English charterhouses, adjacent to the royal palace of Sheen, and in close association with the house of Bridgettine monks and nuns on the opposite bank of the Thames.¹

For the history of the foundation and subsequent development of the London charterhouse we are fortunate in having the *Register*, composed by a monk in the early sixteenth century, and now at the Public Record Office.² Of particular interest also is the map made by the monks to record the course of their water-supply and to facilitate its maintenance.³ Estimates of the date of composition of the map vary, between the middle of the fifteenth century and c. 1500. The map exists in two versions, of which one is a coarser and later copy. The earlier version has careful notes in various hands, and is illuminating not only for its information on the water-supply, but also for its representation of the buildings within the charterhouse area.

The pioneer work for establishing the plan of the monastery was done by Sir William St. John Hope, on the basis of the *Register*, and of the water-supply plan, and was published in 1925. During the 1939-1945 war the site was bombed, and this opened the way to important excavations carried out by W. F. Grimes, which led to some substantial revision of Hope's earlier reconstruction of the plan; the results were published in 1954 in a study by Grimes and Dom David Knowles. Further excavations have since been carried out on behalf of English Heritage and published by Bruno Barber and Christopher Thomas. The London charterhouse is given careful attention by Glyn Coppack and Mick Aston from the point of view of monastic space and topography in a recent publication, and an over-view is provided by Joseph Gribbin in the *Monasticon Cartusiense*.⁴ The charterhouse was situated in a closely restricted area, which determined its lay-out and structural de-

velopment. The site was acquired piecemeal; it stood a little outside the northern city wall of London, to the north of the Augustinian Priory of St. Bartholomew, and of a major livestock market (Smithfield), and the annual Bartholomew fair. On the west it was separated by a stream (flowing into the River Fleet, a tributary of the Thames) from the Priory of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, to the north of which lay the Augustinian nunnery of St. Mary de Fonte (Clerkenwell). St. Paul's Cathedral lay due south of the charterhouse and the Priory of St. Bartholomew, within the city wall⁵ (Fig. 1).

The origins of the site as a religious foundation lie in the Black Death, when it was necessary to establish cemeteries outside the city of London, for those who could no longer be accommodated in the city churches and churchyards. Already in 1348 Ralph de Stratford, Bishop of London, had bought part of a piece of land known for centuries as No Mans Land, just above the centre of what would become the charterhouse precinct, which he enclosed and dedicated as a cemetery (the Pardon Churchyard), with its chapel⁶ (Fig. 2).

In 1349 Sir Walter Manny, a distinguished soldier and courtier, leased from St. Bartholomew's Hospital for use as a further burial-ground the land adjoining this to the south, known as "Spital-croft" or "New Church Haw", bounded on the west and east by houses and gardens, and entered by a lane from the south-west, on the line of what is now Charterhouse Street. Manny erected a chapel, dedicated to the Salutation of the Mother of God. The chapel was at first served by two recluses; in 1351 Manny obtained a Papal licence to establish a college of twelve priests with a warden to offer Masses for the dead, but this project was not realised.⁷ Meanwhile Michael de Northburgh, Bishop of London from 1355, having visited the Paris charterhouse on his way back from a visit to Rome, proposed to Manny that a charterhouse – a specifically urban charterhouse, like that of Paris – be established at the cemetery. In 1361 he gave Manny a thousand marks, so that he himself might be associated with him in the foundation; subsequently the monks of the London charterhouse would regard Manny as the founder of the house, with Northburgh and his successors as principal patrons. The Bishop approached the Priors of Witham and Hinton for help in the foundation; the priors were reluctant at first to consider an urban foundation, but



Fig. 1 - Map showing location of study area (Bruno BARBER and Christopher THOMAS, *The London Charterhouse*, The Museum of London Archaeology Service, Monograph 10, London 2002, p. 2, fig. 1).

were called to London to hear the Bishop's thoughts on the matter, so that they might broach the project with their communities. In the event, both priors died shortly afterwards (the Prior of Hinton at Salisbury, on his way back from London), and the Bishop also – the Bishop bequeathing two thousand pounds and other goods towards the foundation – and so the project languished. However, Manny obtained the agreement

of a subsequent Prior of Hinton, and after overcoming local opposition – the Master of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, the Bishop of Ely and the cathedral chapter of Ely, and the Dean and chapter of St. Paul's – he received the approval of the Carthusian General Chapter in 1370 for the foundation. The Prior of Hinton himself, Dom John Luscombe, made the transition from the remote rural situation of Hinton to become the first

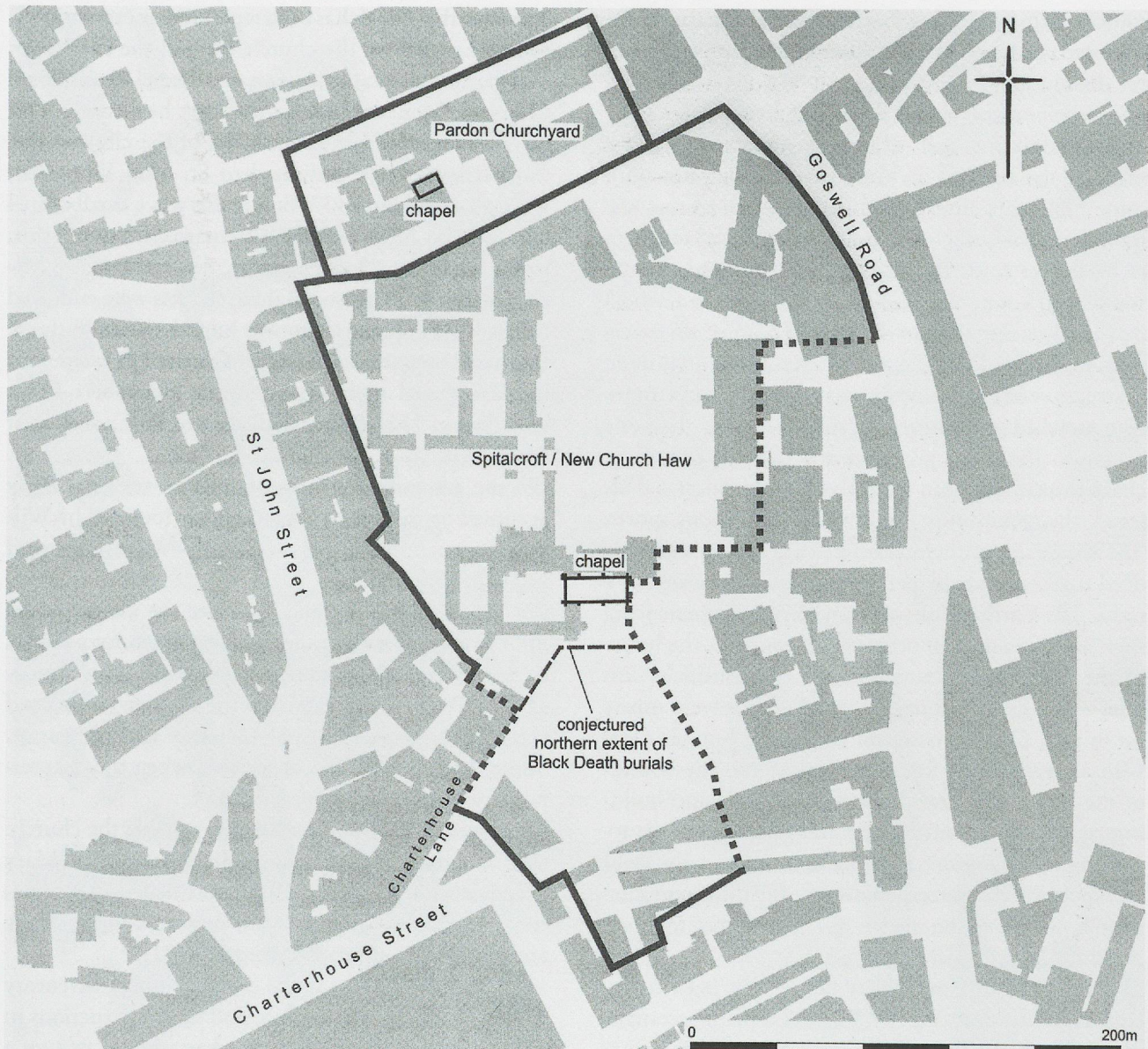


Fig. 2 - Plan of the conjectural major boundaries c. 1350 (Bruno BARBER and Christopher THOMAS, *The London Charterhouse*, *The Museum of London Archaeology Service*, Monograph 10, London 2002, p. 13, fig. 15).

Rector of the London charterhouse, arriving in September 1370, and subsequently Prior. Luscote brought with him a *clericus redditus* from Witham; five further choir-monks and a lay-brother were sent from Hinton, Witham, and Beauvale. Houses were built on the site as temporary accommodation for the monks. The foundation-charter of the new charterhouse was dated 28th March 1371.⁸ It is interesting that the London foundation of the strictly enclosed Carthusian Order could go ahead without the full complement of monks, and without completed accommodation. The original chapel built by Manny for the cemetery became the conventual church.⁹ The house was intended as a double monastery for twenty-four monks and a Prior.¹⁰ In the event, even this bold aspiration would be exceeded; in the last years of the monastery's life, it is stated by Dom Maurice Chauncey, the historian of

the English Carthusian martyrs, that there were thirty choir-monks (apparently including the Prior), and eighteen lay-brothers.¹¹

The first permanent buildings were started some time after Ascension Day, 1371, when an agreement was made with Henry Yevele, Master of the King's Works, for building the first cell and beginning the great cloister.¹² The core-site was Spitalcroft (which became also named New Church Haw), together with the Pardon Churchyard. Spitalcroft was conveyed to Manny by St. Bartholomew's Hospital in 1370. Over the next twenty years ownership of this, together with various immediately related areas to the south-east and to the north of the core-site were consolidated, especially some properties acquired from St. John's Priory and from Westminster Abbey; the final transaction was only completed in 1391 (Fig. 3).¹³ Documentary

sources seem to suggest that the northern parts of the site were not retained by the Carthusians at the time of the dissolution.¹⁴

The development of the buildings proceeded slowly; indeed additions and adjustments were still being made at the time of the dissolution. It was not until some fifty years after the monks' first arrival that the monastery was sufficiently built and enclosed for them to be able to enjoy the solitude that belonged to their vocation. The establishment of a monastery in a suburban area was not without difficulty. For some time they were subject to disturbance, and even to the attempted destruction of the enclosure and cells, by unruly mobs, who attacked and threatened them on more than one occasion. The mob's grievance was that the site of the charterhouse had been an open space where, it was alleged, the community used to practice various sports. The chronicler of the monastery says that this was indeed true, but only by permission and not by any legal right. The Carthusians were not alone in experiencing such violence; on one occasion the mob set the house of the Clerkenwell nuns on fire. The chronicler implies – rightly or wrongly – that Lollards were mixed up in this. On one occasion the mayor himself came with a great crowd, forced their way into the bounds of the monastery, and destroyed the walls and buildings against them, setting new and smaller bounds, according to the *Register*. In this circumstances, the Prior and monks were concerned not to offend the common people, whatever the degree of support that they enjoyed from their wealthy patrons.¹⁵

The outline of the monastery church has been recovered by excavation (Fig. 4).¹⁶ It was a plain rectangle, measuring 27.4 x 9.1 metres, remarkably like the other churches of the Order in England. The western bay was marked by buttresses.

The *Register* gives further chronological details,¹⁷ which can be linked with the archaeological evidence.¹⁸

Before 1405 the church had been extended to the west, to create the lay-brothers' choir, presumably separated from the monks' choir by a screen.¹⁹

At the extreme west end of the church was the chapel of St. Anne, in which the altars of the Holy Cross and St. Anne were consecrated in 1405.²⁰

The chapter-house, constructed c. 1414, lay to the north-east of the monastic church.²¹ In 1414 an altar was consecrated in the chapter-house to St. Michael and All Saints, and other altars in a small chapel adjoining the chapter-house.²²

The little cloister was built in 1436 between the church and the guest-house.²³

The *Register* lists numerous other chapels and altars which were built on to the church, or elsewhere in the precincts of the monastery; the outline of the chapels at-

tached to the church has been recovered by excavation.²⁴ At the east end of the church, behind the high altar, there is documentary evidence of a chapel of unknown dedication and date; this may have been the Prior's private chapel. On the south side of the church were three chapels. One dedicated to St. John Evangelist, was consecrated in 1437. Beside this was a small chapel dedicated to SS. Jerome and Bernard. Adjoining this, to the west, was a longer chapel, dedicated to SS. Michael and John Baptist. All these chapels were endowed by Sir John Popham, who was buried in one of them; they were consecrated in 1453. On the north side was the last chapel to be founded, by Sir Robert Rede, who died in 1519; it was dedicated to St. Catharine of Alexandria.

On the east side of the same, on the site previously occupied by the parlour, was a chapel founded by William Freeman in honour of St. Agnes, and consecrated in 1475.²⁵

On the ground floor and opposite the chapel of St. John Evangelist, where there was no room for a chapel as such, were two altars dedicated to the Holy Trinity and SS. Peter and Paul; within the chapter-house itself was an altar dedicated to SS. Michael and All Angels. These three altars were consecrated when the chapter-house was formally opened in 1414.

There were two additional chapels outside the church: that in the guest-house, dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene, and built in 1436; and that in the cemetery, outside the enclosure wall, dedicated to Our Lady and All Saints, and consecrated in 1481.²⁶

From the descriptions in the commissioners' inventory at the time of the dissolution, and from instructions in wills, it would appear that the charterhouse was on a level with the neighbouring parish churches of London in the number and style of its monuments, screens, and images.²⁷ The devotion and generosity of lay-people meant that the church was liberally provided with vessels and other accoutrements for the celebration of Mass, with some elaborate vestments, including gold ornament and pearls. The chapels included painted and gilded images. While this hardly matches the Renaissance exuberance of Pavia or Miraflores, it is still contrary to the spirit of simplicity as enjoined in the *Statuta Nova* of 1368 and again in the *Tertia Compilatio* of 1509.²⁸

In the cramped situation of the London charterhouse there was no place for a distinctly separate "lower house" for the lay-brothers, as in the earlier, rural charterhouses. The practice had begun elsewhere of housing the lay-brothers in quarters adjoining the central buildings, though not impinging on them. There is no documentary evidence for London on this point, but it has been proposed that the lay-brothers were housed

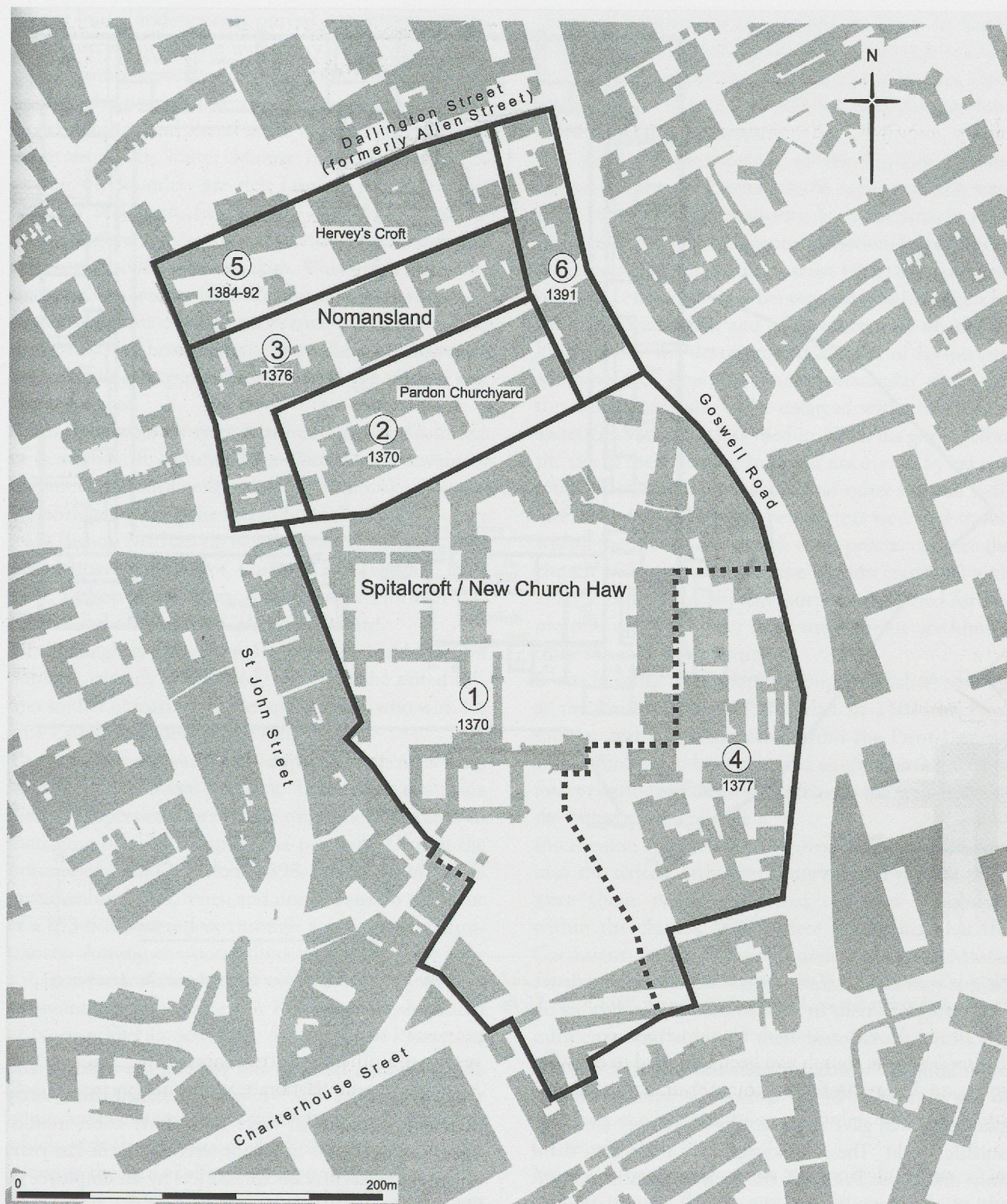


Fig. 3 - Map showing parcels of land and dates of acquisition (Bruno BARBER and Christopher THOMAS, *The London Charterhouse, The Museum of London Archaeology Service, Monograph 10, London 2002, p. 17, fig. 17, after David KNOWLES and W. F. GRIMES, London Charterhouse, London 1954).*

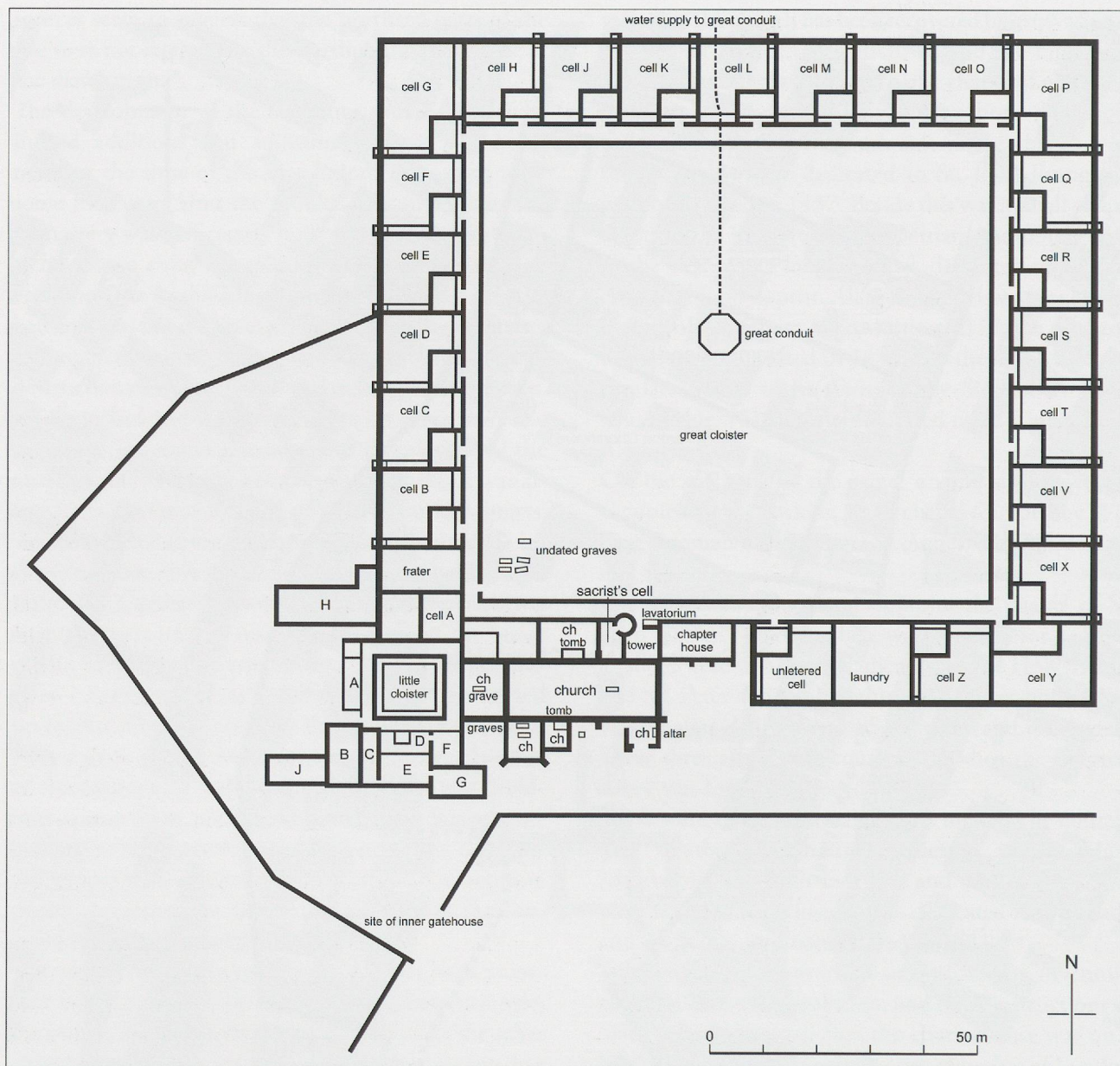


Fig. 4 - Conjectural plan of the Charterhouse c. 1450 (Bruno BARBER and Christopher THOMAS, *The London Charterhouse, The Museum of London Archaeology Service, Monograph 10, London 2002, p. 30-31, fig. 36*).

in buildings, of which some remains still exist, situated to the south-west of the cloister, between it and the gateway which gave access to the monastery from the outside world. These buildings took their final form only under the Priors of the early sixteenth century, and were apparently completed in the very last years by Dom Houghton. Besides (presumably) the accommodation of the lay-brothers, they included the brew-house and stores, and perhaps the laundry, which had originally been situated in the south walk of the great cloister.²⁹

Dom John Luscombe was in office as Rector and then Prior of the monastery for over twenty-seven years; at the death of the second Prior, Dom John Okendon, in 1412, nineteen cells for the choir-monks had been completed, leaving six to be built, together with the

chapter-house, farmery, and parlour, the conduit, and also the precinct wall.³⁰ It will be recalled that shortly before the dissolution there were thirty choir-monks; the building of new cells continued up to the last years of the monastery. A document left by an employee of the royal commissioners at the time of the dissolution, indicates that some cells existed which did not open directly on the great cloister, and which do not figure in the plan of the water supply. There is reference to a "new cell", which from the description may have been that of the Prior, and to three other cells, which existed to the east of the church, and to the south of the cloister.³¹

In the course of the 1948-1949 excavations on the site the location of the monastic cemetery was sought and found in the south-west quadrant of the great cloister.³²

As the initial endowments proved insufficient for the full construction of the monastery, money had to be raised from revenues or benefactions. The list of donors of the twenty-five cells existing in the mid-fifteenth century, and found in the *Register*, is revealing.³³ Apart from Sir Walter Manny himself, noteworthy among the founders are rich London merchants: Sir William Walworth, fish-monger and twice mayor of London, gave alone or in conjunction with others no less than six cells. John Lovekyn, Walworth's sometime master, also a leading fish-monger, gave in conjunction with others four cells. Adam Fraunceys, a mercer, and twice mayor of London, gave two cells; John Blakenys, another fish-monger, helped to build the church and chapter-house.

Among the nobility were Mary de Valence, Countess of Pembroke, foundress of the Poor Clare convent of Denny in Cambridgeshire, and of Pembroke College, Cambridge. Among the hierarchy of the Church, apart from Bishop Michael de Northburgh, there were John Buckingham, Bishop of Lincoln, and Thomas Hatfield, Bishop of Durham, benefactor of Durham Cathedral and of Durham College at Oxford.

Of the knightly class, apart from Manny, and Sir John Popham, already mentioned, there was the noted former soldier of fortune Sir Robert Knolles, who with his wife Custance endowed one cell.

The charterhouse was heavily dependent on rents from its extensive London property. There were also more distant properties, where there might be difficulties in managing or even retaining the property. During the priorate of John Okendon (1398-1412), almost all its immovable goods, rents, and possessions, to the value of £183-6-8d, were lost through a variety of circumstances. Among the possessions which they lost were a manor (or at least a moiety of it) in Romney Marsh, the manor of Hintingford in Kent, the parish church of Norton Veel in Somerset, the manor of Plumstead in Kent, and certain rents in Calais.³⁴

One more positive note, Edward IV gave the charterhouse extensive property in Ogbourne (Wiltshire), which with the support of the Bishop of Ely they retained in the face of efforts by the provost and scholars of Kong's College, Cambridge, to take it from them after the king's death.³⁵ The accounts of Dom Philipp Underwode, Procurator in 1493-1500, not only show his success in collecting rents, but also refer to bailiff-run estates in Bloomsbury (London) and Stockton Magna in Hertfordshire.³⁶ Just before the suppression, the charterhouse was listed (in 1537) as having numerous tenements near it, and in the city; pastures in Marylebone and Holborn, a manor in Bloomsbury, the manors of Rolleston (Leicestershire), Westfield (Norfolk), rents from the manors of Ogbourne (Wilt-

shire), Cardones (Kent), various rectories in Essex, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Huntingdonshire, and Norfolk; lands in Kingston-upon-Thames (Surrey), Higham (Kent), the Bull Inn at Rochester, land and a wood in Middlesex.³⁷

The geographical situation of the London charterhouse, and the need to remain on terms not only with those in ecclesiastical authority, but with those in positions of power and influence in national and also in commercial life in London, must inevitably have imposed a certain tension between the maintenance of the Carthusian ideal, and a due acceptance of, and allowance for, the devotion and interest of lay-people. We have seen how the simple rectangular church of the monastery came to be enlarged with chapels and altars. Sir Walter Manny died in 1372; his grave before the site of the high altar has been uncovered by excavation.³⁸ Testamentary evidence and other records indicate that very many other benefactors were laid to rest within the monastery church or its precincts; since the church and its surrounds were already crammed with altars and side-chapels, this must have imposed further pressure on space; over sixty such burials are known from the sixteenth century.³⁹

It was in order to regularise a long established practice at the London charterhouse, that in 1501 the Prior sought, and obtained licence from the Prior-General and Diffinitors to bury the dead as often as the need to foster charity and devotion and assist the well-being of the house should require it.⁴⁰

Intercession for the dead involved a further intrusion into the strict Carthusian observance. By 1500 there were about twenty perpetual chantries established within the church. While there is evidence that the Carthusians themselves were careful in saying Masses for the souls of those who had asked that they should do so, this added considerably to their liturgical commitments, and some of their benefactors specifically ask in their wills that a chantry priest should say Mass for them in one of the chapels of the charterhouse, in line with the practice of some Orders other than the Carthusians.⁴¹

From the beginning of the monastery's existence, its location meant that it was readily accessible to the devout, as well as to the occasional hostile mob. In 1399 the London Carthusians obtained the Portiuncula Indulgence for seven years for visitors giving alms, for which purpose women were allowed to enter the church, choir, and cloister.⁴²

In fact, whatever the Carthusian Statutes said, women had always been wont to enter the church, and, the chronicler says, the brethren for fear of the common people did not dare to forbid them. It was to alleviate this situation that in 1405 the altars of the Holy

Cross and St. Anne were consecrated in the chapel of St. Anne at the west end of the church, so that women might be able to hear Mass there, and so by degrees be excluded from the church. A sanction to the move to exclude women from the church was made in the same year by the Visitors to the London charterhouse, two Priors from the Low Countries, who were thus detached from local or even English affairs, who in their disposition for the London charterhouse began by stating that the King of England himself had forbidden women to enter the precinct or even the chapel of the London charterhouse, and went on to direct that, in order that the *Nova Statuta* on this point be observed, a wall be built to exclude women from the church, and that no monk except the Prior or Procurator should go beyond this wall, to visit the public cemetery. The Visitors also forbade the Prior from having sermons preached in the outer cemetery of the house.⁴³

The reception of guests in the charterhouse of the capital city evidently posed a problem for Carthusian simplicity and solitude. Thus in 1470 the Prior had sought licence from the General Chapter to eat with guests, but was referred to the Statutes.⁴⁴ On the other hand in 1473, in answer to a question from the Prior of London, the Prior-General replied that the use of silver vessels for notable guests (as distinct from the monks themselves) was permitted.⁴⁵

There were limits to what might be tolerated, even in the busy environs of London. In the following year, 1474, the Prior was rebuked by the General Chapter for having tolerated hunting and other inappropriate activities (*inordinationes*) in the surrounding of his house, and were ordered to exclude such things in the future.⁴⁶

It was no doubt to relieve pressure from the faithful upon the monastic church that the chapel in the cemetery, already mentioned, was built in 1481. The *Register* says that this was done on the directions of Visitors to the charterhouse from overseas⁴⁷ – just as earlier it had been Visitors from outside England who had insisted that steps be taken to exclude women from the monastic church.

Individuals continued to visit and even live in the charterhouse. The Bishop of Lincoln, who was the Conservator of the Order in England, built a house within the limits of the charterhouse, having obtained the approval of the General Chapter in 1490.⁴⁸ St. Thomas More, as a layman, lived at the charterhouse for some four years (c. 1499-1503).⁴⁹

In the time of the martyred Prior St. John Houghton, it was a by-word in London that if one wanted to hear the worship of God rendered with devotion, one should visit the London charterhouse; Dom Maurice Chauncy says that not only Londoners, but also am-

bassadors of other nations would attend services.⁵⁰

Of considerable interest is the water supply for the London charterhouse, for which, as said, a plan exists (Fig. 5). The River Fleet ran close by the charterhouse, but this was not the source of the monastery's water-supply. The original source is not known; it has been suggested that the monastery may originally have had to use wells on its own site.⁵¹ In 1430 the charterhouse was given a spring in the manor of Bernesbury in Islington. Through the generosity of William Symmes, a grocer of London, and of Anne Tatersale, probably the wife of a draper and alderman, in 1431 a fully-engineered water-supply to the monastery was constructed, over a distance of some two miles, and distributed from a rather magnificent conduit in the centre of the cloister garth. Symmes, who founded a cell and was in other respects a considerable benefactor to the charterhouse, also left money for the maintenance and repair of the water-supply.⁵²

The supply of the water from Islington was in itself not unusual; the neighbouring religious houses of St. John of Jerusalem and of St. Mary, Clerkenwell, also took their water from this area. The plan of the water-supply details the engineering, and shows subsequent modifications during the life of the charterhouse.⁵³ Originally four springs were tapped; this was increased to eight. Well-houses were built over these, and the water was led in a stone channel to a conduit-house (which survived in modified form until 1831 in Islington), from where it was led by pipe to the charterhouse, passing through the land of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, which it crossed by licence, and where two further springs were tapped. Here, in a small stone building, the pressure on the pipe was controlled. The plan shows in immense detail how the supply-pipe crossed the field called "Commanders Mantel" belonging to St. John's, and then through three settling-tanks and on to a second conduit-house, the height of the water being controlled by an overflow-pipe. The "home-pipe" leading the water to the charterhouse crossed the road from Islington to London, and entered the field of the nuns of Clerkenwell, where there was an air-vent; as it entered the charterhouse land a pipe led to a tank at the border of the charterhouse land with that of St. John's Hospital, so that the charterhouse water-system might be drained off if it needed to be cleansed or repaired. This used technology which had been available since the middle years of the twelfth century.

Within the charterhouse, the home-pipe ran to the centre of the great cloister, where there was a water-tower, a stone octagonal structure with an upper storey of timber. This upper storey contained a water-tank (some twenty metres lower than its water-source), into which the water ran under pressure; from here

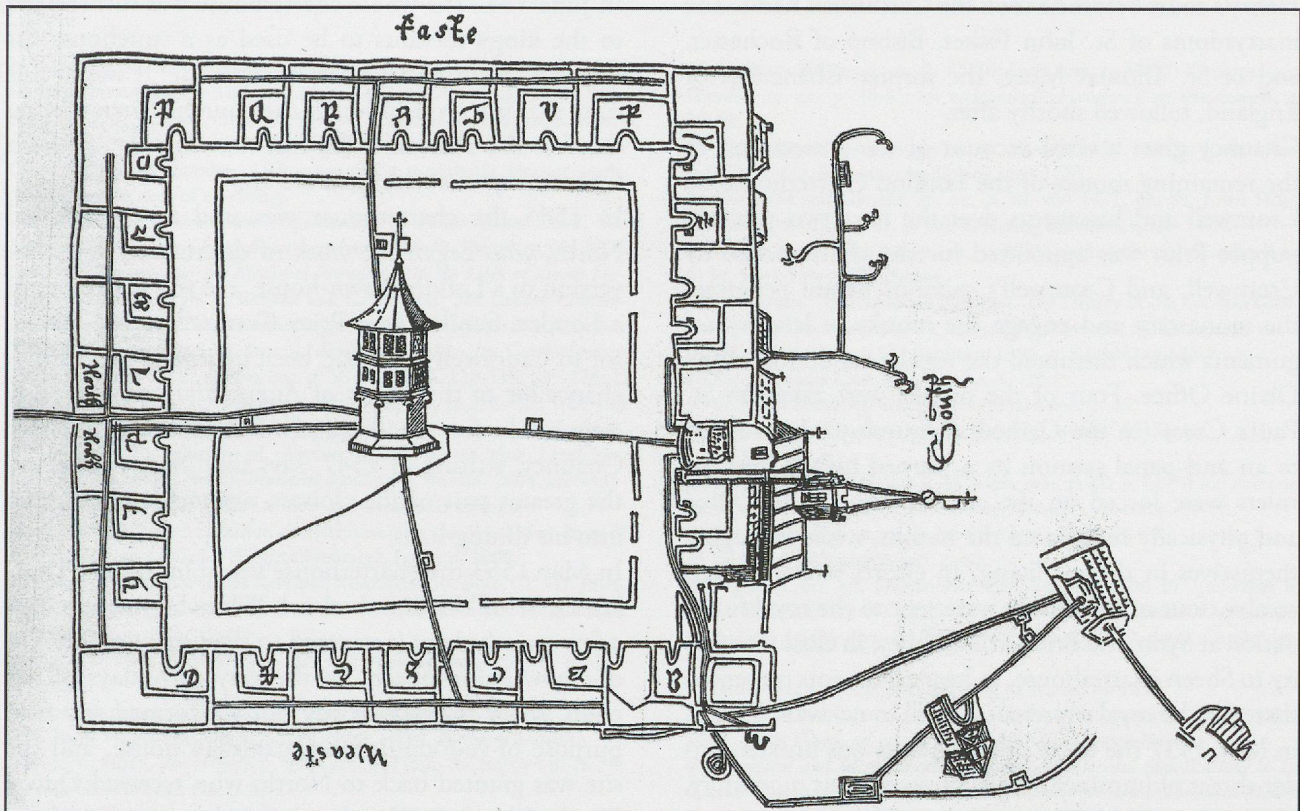


Fig. 5 - The watercourse drawing (David KNOWLES and W. F. GRIMES, *London Charterhouse*, London 1954, p. 35, fig. 3).

lead pipes led to each side of the great cloister, and branched off to individual cells. On each branch there was a suspiral to reduce the pressure, with small tanks within the cloister garden. The cells on the west, north, and east sides of the great cloister received their water directly from the water-tower; on the south range the water was taken first to the cloister lauer, and from there water was piped to the three cells at the east end of that range – to the laundry, the kitchen and buttery, to the brew-house, and to the flesh-kitchen. The cells of the south range were the last to be built, and their water-supply must post-date the original arrangement. The sacristan, whose cell was next to the chapter-house, had two taps: one in his cell, with drinking-water, and one for washing liturgical utensils.

The proximity of the London charterhouse to the centre of political and commercial life had been an advantage in securing benefactions following its foundation. With the machinations of Henry VIII to secure his divorce from Catharine of Aragon, and in association with this to secure his position as “supreme head” of the Church in England and reject the authority of the Pope, the London Carthusians were driven into a more unwelcome public gaze. The story is told by Dom Maurice Chauncy, one of those who escaped martyrdom, and who became the leader of the short-lived restoration at Sheen under Mary Tudor, and of the more enduring Sheen Anglorum in exile,⁵⁴ and supported

and amplified by public documents.

The Carthusians did not go out their way to hasten martyrdom, but responded with patience and discretion to successive developments, and were ready when the decisive moment came. No doubt they sympathised with Queen Catharine, but guided by the Prior, St. John Houghton, they refrained from decisive action until they were required to subscribe to that which was explicitly contrary to their faith. They acquiesced in the Act of Succession, accepting Henry’s marriage to Anne Boleyn, and the legitimization of their offspring (the future Queen Elizabeth). But in the face of the demand that they accept the Act of Supremacy, the Prior, Dom John Houghton, together with the Prior of Axholme, and Beauvale, stood firm. Imprisoned in the Tower of London, they withstood the rage of the King’s Vicar-General, Thomas Cromwell, in a personal interview. They were then tried and found guilty of treason by a highly reluctant jury, who were bullied by Cromwell into acquiescence under the threat of themselves being found guilty of treason. They were dragged through the streets of London as a public spectacle on hurdles, and barbarously executed at Tyburn in May 1535, together with St. Reginald Reynolds, the Bridgettine of Syon. In June they were followed by the acting superior of the London charterhouse, St. Humphrey Middlemore, the Procurator, St. William Exmewe, and St. Sebastian Newdigate, who had been a member of

Henry's court before he took the Carthusian habit. The martyrdoms of St. John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, and of St. Thomas More, the former Chancellor of England, followed shortly after.

Chauncy gives a vivid account of the persecution of the remaining monks of the London charterhouse by Cromwell and his agents over the next two years. A puppet Prior was appointed for the charterhouse by Cromwell, and Cromwell's minions would penetrate the monastery and engage the monks in lengthy arguments which disrupted the regular rendering of the Divine Office. Four of the monks were taken to St. Paul's Cross (in the Cathedral church-yard) to listen to an anti-papal sermon by a learned bishop. Secular rulers were forced on the charterhouse, who bullied and physically maltreated the monks, while indulging themselves in riotous living. In efforts to break their resolve, four of the monks were sent to the royal foundation at Syon, the Bridgettine Abbey, in close proximity to Sheen charterhouse, to hear arguments presented there for the royal supremacy – still to no avail. Finally, in May 1537 the unity of the monks was broken, under threat of imminent destruction of their monastery. The majority, in the hope of being allowed to continue their monastic life, took the oath of Supremacy; ten refused, and died in appalling conditions in Newgate prison, save one who survived, only to be martyred at Tyburn in 1540. Two other London Carthusians who had been exiled to Hull but who stood firm, were executed at York.

The acceptance of the royal supremacy was futile. After a further year in the charterhouse, under the domination of the king's agents, the monastery was finally handed over to the king in November 1538 and the monks expelled. The subsequent Marian restoration at the charterhouse of Sheen lies outside this story.

After the surrender,⁵⁵ the church and perhaps the chapter-house were given into the care of a Dr. Cave, and remained locked for a year or two at least. The rest of the fabric was controlled on behalf of the king's commissioners by one William Dale. Among the tenants who occupied parts of the building at the time were a family of Venetian musicians named Bassano, who had recently been introduced into England by the king to serve the court.

In June 1542 the whole charterhouse was turned over to the king's servants to be used as a storehouse for tents and hunting-nets and other tackle. It was at this time that the profanation of the church – men playing dice on the altar, and the like – occurred, of which Chauncy speaks with such feeling.⁵⁶

In 1545 the charterhouse was sold to Sir Edward North, who began the work of destruction and conversion to a London town-house. He was a member of a London family and a Privy Counsellor, and successor to Cromwell (who had been beheaded in 1540) as chancellor of the Court of Augmentations, the body responsible for the disposal of monastic properties. Chauncy, writing in 1547, says that North destroyed the greater part of the cloister, and made the church into his dining-hall.

In May 1553 the charterhouse was sold to John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. When he was executed a few months later it reverted to the Crown, Mary Tudor now being queen. In the very early days of her reign, Mary had apparently not yet formed any firm purpose of re-founding a Carthusian house, and the site was granted back to North, who received Queen Elizabeth there for five days before her coronation.

After further changes, the charterhouse was bought in 1611 by the wealthy merchant Thomas Sutton, who founded a secular school and hospital (almshouse) on the site. He died the same year, and is buried in what is now the chapel. The school was moved to a site in Surrey in the nineteenth century. After the Second World War, there were the important excavations by W. F. Grimes, already referred to. The charterhouse continues to serve as an almshouse, under the supervision of a Master.

Considering the changes and damage that have taken place, a surprising amount of the monastery is left, including the gatehouse and part of the outer wall of the monastery; the Wash-House Court, formerly the quarters of the lay-brothers; the entrance to cells along the west side of the cloister garth. Other entrances to cells survive on the east side of the same, included within the modern St. Bartholomew's Medical School. The outlines of buildings whose foundations have been recovered are marked out lightly in concrete, enabling the visitor to appreciate something of the monastic lay-out.

Notes

- 1 On the English charterhouses generally, see *Monasticon Cartusiense*, vol. III, ed. James HOGG and Gerhard SCHLEGEL (Analecta Cartusiana 185/3), Salzburg, 2005, p. 363-604; the articles on the English (and Irish and Scottish) charterhouses are by Joseph GRIBBIN. E. M. THOMPSON, *The Carthusian Order in England* (London, 1930), remains a remarkable pioneer work, though now in need of up-dating.
- On the London charterhouse in particular: W. H. ST. JOHN HOPE, *The History of the London Charterhouse*, London, 1925; D. KNOWLES and W. F. GRIMES, *Charterhouse: The Medieval Foundation in the Light of Recent Discoveries*, London, 1954; B. BARBER and C. THOMAS, *The London Charterhouse* (Museum of London Archaeology Service Monograph 10), London, 2002; G. COPPACK and M. ASTON, *Christ's Poor Men: The Carthusians in England*, Stroud, 2002, passim, esp. p. 36-38, 52-66, 118-119, 135-136; J. GRIBBIN, "London", in *Monasticon Cartusiense*, III, p. 391-402, with full bibliography to date.
- For monastic topography, M. ASTON, *Monasteries in their Landscape*, Stroud, 2000, and J. BOND, *Monastic Landscapes*, Stroud, 2004, are wide-ranging, but only refer to the London charterhouse incidentally.
- On the buildings of the London charterhouse after the dissolution, there is *The Charterhouse. A Guide* (English Heritage), London, 2000.
- 2 Public Record Office (Land Revenue, Miscellaneous, Book 61). ST. JOHN HOPE, *The History*, contains the Latin text, with English translation, of the relevant portion of the *Register*.
- 3 ST. JOHN HOPE, *The History*, p. 107-143 (reproduction facing p. 143).
- 4 See note 1.
- 5 Plan in BARBER and THOMAS, *The London Charterhouse*, p. 2, fig. 1.
- 6 ST. JOHN HOPE, *The History*, p. 3-5, citing STOW, *Survey of London*.
- 7 ST. JOHN HOPE, *The History*, p. 6-9; Latin text from the *Register*, p. 28-30. See also GRIBBIN, art. cit., p. 391.
- 8 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 9-14; Latin text, p. 30-35. Foundation charter, *ibid.*, p. 24-25, n. 23.
- 9 This is explicitly stated in the *Register*. ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 8; Latin text, p. 30.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 20; Latin text (Bull of Pope Urban VI), p. 27-28, n. 27; p. 41; Latin text (*Register*), p. 49.
- 11 Dom Maurice CHAUNCY's *Historia aliquot Martyrum Anglorum, maxime octodecim Cartusianorum sub rege Henrico Octavo ob Fidei Confessionem et Summi Pontificis Jura Vindicanda interemptorum*, in its various forms, is published in Analecta Cartusiana 86 (3 vol., Salzburg, 2006-2007), with edition of the 1547 version and collation of versions by J. CLARK, and historical introduction by P. CUNICH.
- See the Montreuil (1888), reprint of the 1550 (Mainz) version, c. 5, p. 65, photographically reproduced *ibid.*, vol. 2.
- 12 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 14; Latin text, p. 35. On Yevele, cf. KNOWLES and GRIMES, *Charterhouse*, p. 7, with n. 6.
- 13 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 16-20; KNOWLES and GRIMES, *Charterhouse*, p. 18-21. The plan showing the full extent of the monastic property in parcels as acquired (*ibid.*, p. 19, fig. 2) is reproduced in BARBER and THOMAS, *op. cit.*, p. 17, fig. 17.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 16, with reference to the work of Porter and Richardson.
- 15 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 42-43; Latin text, p. 49-50.
- 16 KNOWLES and GRIMES, *op. cit.*, p. 51-56, with folding plan after p. 82; cf. G. COPPACK and M. ASTON, *Christ's Poor Men*, p. 52.
- 17 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 41-46; Latin text, p. 49-52.
- 18 KNOWLES and GRIMES, *op. cit.*, p. 29-33, 41-50 (Recovery of the monastic plan), 51-67 (Excavations of 1948-1949). The recovered plan of the monastic buildings is after p. 82.
- 19 G. COPPACK and M. ASTON, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
- 20 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 42; Latin text, p. 49.
- 21 KNOWLES and GRIMES, *op. cit.*, p. 47; for the date, cf. ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 44; Latin text, p. 51.
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 45; Latin text, p. 52; KNOWLES and GRIMES, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
- 24 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 42-46; Latin text, p. 49-52; KNOWLES and GRIMES, *op. cit.*, p. 28-31; for archaeological evidence on the chapels, p. 56-63.
- 25 KNOWLES and GRIMES, *op. cit.*, p. 30, says 1453, but ST. JOHN HOPE (*op. cit.*, p. 45), following the *Register*, says 1475.
- 26 KNOWLES and GRIMES, *op. cit.*, p. 30, says 1471, but ST. JOHN HOPE (*op. cit.*, p. 45; Latin text, p. 52), following the *Register*, says 1481.
- 27 KNOWLES and GRIMES, *op. cit.*, p. 30-31, with reference to indications in ST. JOHN HOPE, *The History*.
- 28 J. GRIBBIN, "Ex Oblatione Fidelium. The Liturgy of the London Charterhouse and the Laity", in *The Mystical Tradition and the Carthusians*, vol. 5 (Analecta Cartusiana 130), Salzburg, 1996, p. 83-104, esp. 83-86.
- 29 KNOWLES and GRIMES, *op. cit.*, p. 31-32.
- 30 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 41-42; Latin text, p. 49.
- 31 KNOWLES and GRIMES, *op. cit.*, p. 74-82, with p. 81, fig. 7.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 66.
- 33 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 58; Latin text, p. 80; p. 68-74 for notes on the founders. See further KNOWLES and GRIMES, *op. cit.*, p. 24-28.
- 34 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 56-58; Latin text, p. 78-79.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 58-59; Latin text, p. 80.
- 36 GRIBBIN, art. cit. (*Monasticon Cartusiense*), p. 396-397, referring to Public Record Office SC 12/25/55; A. R. WINES, *The London Charterhouse in the Later Middle Ages: An Institutional History*, Ph. D. thesis, Cambridge, 1998.
- 37 GRIBBIN, art. cit., p. 397, referring to WINES, *op. cit.*
- 38 KNOWLES and GRIMES, *op. cit.*, p. 48-49, with Appendix C, p. 87-92.
- 39 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 88-99, 100-104 (Appendix III).
- 40 *Liturgical and Miscellaneous Questions, Dubia and Supplications to La Grande Chartreuse from the English Carthusian Province in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. J. GRIBBIN (Analecta Cartusiana 100:32), Salzburg, 1999, p. 60.
- 41 GRIBBIN, "Ex Oblatione Fidelium", art. cit., p. 89; art. "London" (*Monasticon Cartusiense*), p. 392.
- 42 GRIBBIN, "Ex Oblatione Fidelium", art. cit., p. 90, with note 37.
- 43 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 42-43; Latin text, p. 49-50.
- 44 *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale Ms. Latin 10888. Part II. 1466-1474*, ed. M. SARGENT and J. HOGG (Analecta Cartusiana 100:6), Salzburg, 1985, p. 124.
- 45 *Liturgical and Miscellaneous Questions, op. cit.*, p. 54-55.
- 46 *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter, op. cit.*, p. 224.
- 47 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, p. 45-46; Latin text, p. 52. The *chartae* for the English Province for most of the years 1485-1481 are extant: *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter. London, Lambeth Palace Ms. 413. Part 4. 1475-1481*, ed. J. CLARK (Analecta Cartusiana 100:12:2), Salzburg, 1992, but this item is not among them.
- 48 *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Rawlinson D. 318*, ed. M. SARGENT and J. HOGG (Analecta Cartusiana 100:2), Salzburg, 1983, p. 214.
- 49 *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More... by Nicholas Harpsfield*, ed. Elsie HITCHCOCK (Early English Text Society, Ordinary Series 186), Oxford, 1932, p. 17.
- 50 CHAUNCY, *Historia aliquot Martyrum*, edition of Montreuil 1888, p. 69.
- 51 G. COPPACK and M. ASTON, *Christ's Poor Men*, p. 118-119.
- 52 ST. JOHN HOPE, *op. cit.*, chap. IV, p. 107-144, describes the water-supply, with the Latin text of the *Register* in the notes, and an appendix on the water-supply of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem.
- 53 On reproductions of the plan, see note 3 above. The account that follows owes much to G. COPPACK and M. ASTON, *Christ's Poor Men*, p. 118-119.
- 54 On the versions and editions of CHAUNCY's *Historia*, see note 11 above. The account of the martyrdom is found in p. 88-120 of the Montreuil 1888 edition.
- 55 On the monastery after the suppression, see KNOWLES and GRIMES, *op. cit.*, p. 36-40; 76-80; 84-86 (Appendix B).
- 56 CHAUNCY, *Historia aliquot Martyrum*, ed. cit., p. 119-120.

