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Book Reviews



ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL BEFORE WREN. By John Schofield. Pp. x and 386, Illus 244. English Heritage, 2011. Price: £100.00. ISBN 978 1 848020 56 6.

This is a thorough, very well illustrated and readable book, and in its hard-back form it is good value for money. The largest and most significant section of the publication sets out details of the various phases of the pre-Wren secular cathedral in London, drawing from documentary sources, historical illustrations, a number of limited excavations and a large number of small-scale observations. It is regrettable that a large area to the north of the cathedral, on the site of the Pardon Cloister and the Becket Chapel, was destroyed with very little chance for recording in 1969–70. Having said that, Schofield has made the very best of what records were available to him.

No physical remains of the first cathedral, built in AD 604, and its subsequent Anglo-Saxon rebuilds, the final phase of which survived up to 1087, are known, but the location is tentatively postulated beneath the Romanesque cathedral. Rather more is known of the latter, and the adjacent St Gregory's church, with much of the detail being skilfully gleaned from Hollar's ground plan of 1657 and his detailed illustrations of the cathedral. Wyk's drawings of 1672–1673 are also put to good use in assessing details of the Romanesque work. The 'New Work' of 1259, comprising a major rebuilding of the choir and an eastward expansion of the underlying crypt, relies on Hollar's illustrations as well as antiquarian recording of the foundations in 1879 and the interpretation of selected stones from the lapidarium. There is a good section on the medieval and later tombs from seventeenth-century illustrations. Evidence of medieval and post-medieval structures in the graveyard and the cemetery are also presented. Major changes to the cathedral and precincts took place in the Reformation from 1530 to 1641 and this period is well discussed, as is the 1633–42 restoration by Jones with the construction of an ornate portico at the west end of the cathedral. The destruction of the church by fire in 1666 and the start of the rebuilding by Wren in 1675 are fully discussed.

A comprehensive gazetteer of the recorded archaeological sites, which comprise eighty-three in total, is provided towards the end of the book, for those requiring further information on the stratigraphy and more detailed plans. Although a selection of the moulded stones is reported on in the book, I would have liked to have seen a more comprehensive analysis of the stones in the lapidarium. The study of this material may well have added more detail to the interpretation of the various phases of the cathedral.

Only a small number of such thorough studies of cathedrals and their setting have been published in the last fifteen years, largely due to lack of funds for undertaking such a major synthesis and the specialist nature of such work with a limited number of skilled

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cathedral archaeologists. As such this publication is a very welcome addition to the ecclesiastical archaeologist's library.

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