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Architectural & Archaeological Society

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Verulamium: Insula XVI.

Report on the Excavations of 1934.

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INSULA XVI lies immediately west of the Theatre and it was excavated while work was still going on at the latter site and continued, after it, well into December of 1934. The major part of the work was done by volunteer labour, the helpers being Mr. Cox and Mr. James Broad without whose assistance this work would not have been possible.

Part of Miss Kenyon's work in the previous season (that of investigating the line of the Fosse enclosing the first-century town) had discovered the road 18ft. wide, that forms the north boundary of this insula, and had found walls at several points to the south of it, but at that time it was not possible to make a detailed examination of this area. Her work at the Theatre had included the fixing of the building frontages enclosing it and had formed the starting point for work on Insula XVI by discovering a chalk-built wall, with buttresses along one face, as well as the "robber trench" of a wall on the Theatre side of it.

Before describing any points in connection with the work, it will be clearer if I describe the main results, more or less in their historical sequence and in reference to the plan (Fig. 1).

The insula was found to be of rectangular shape (approximately 300ft. × 160ft., but with the west end slightly narrower than the east), and to have its greatest length on the same axis as that of the Theatre. Roads bounded it on three sides, the Theatre Square occupied the fourth. The road on the south side is 29ft. wide, that on the north 18ft.; the road at the west end is at least 29ft. wide, but, owing to the denudation of soil from this the highest part of the site, the exact width could not be settled.

The only building in this insula was a Temple of the well-known Romano-Celtic type, of which over a dozen have been found in this country, and over sixty on the continent.¹ This consists of a square building, externally 53 ft. square, containing a small square *cella*, intern-

¹ These Temples are described by Dr. R. E. M. Wheeler, "A Romano-Celtic Temple near Harlow, Essex, and a note on the type" *Ant. Journ.* viii, 300.

VERULAMIUM, INSULA XVI, TEMPLE.

SCALE OF 50 100 150 200 250 300 FEET.

PLAN OF 1ST & EARLY 2ND C. (BLACK), 3RD C. (WHITE).

PLAN OF 4TH C. REBUILD.

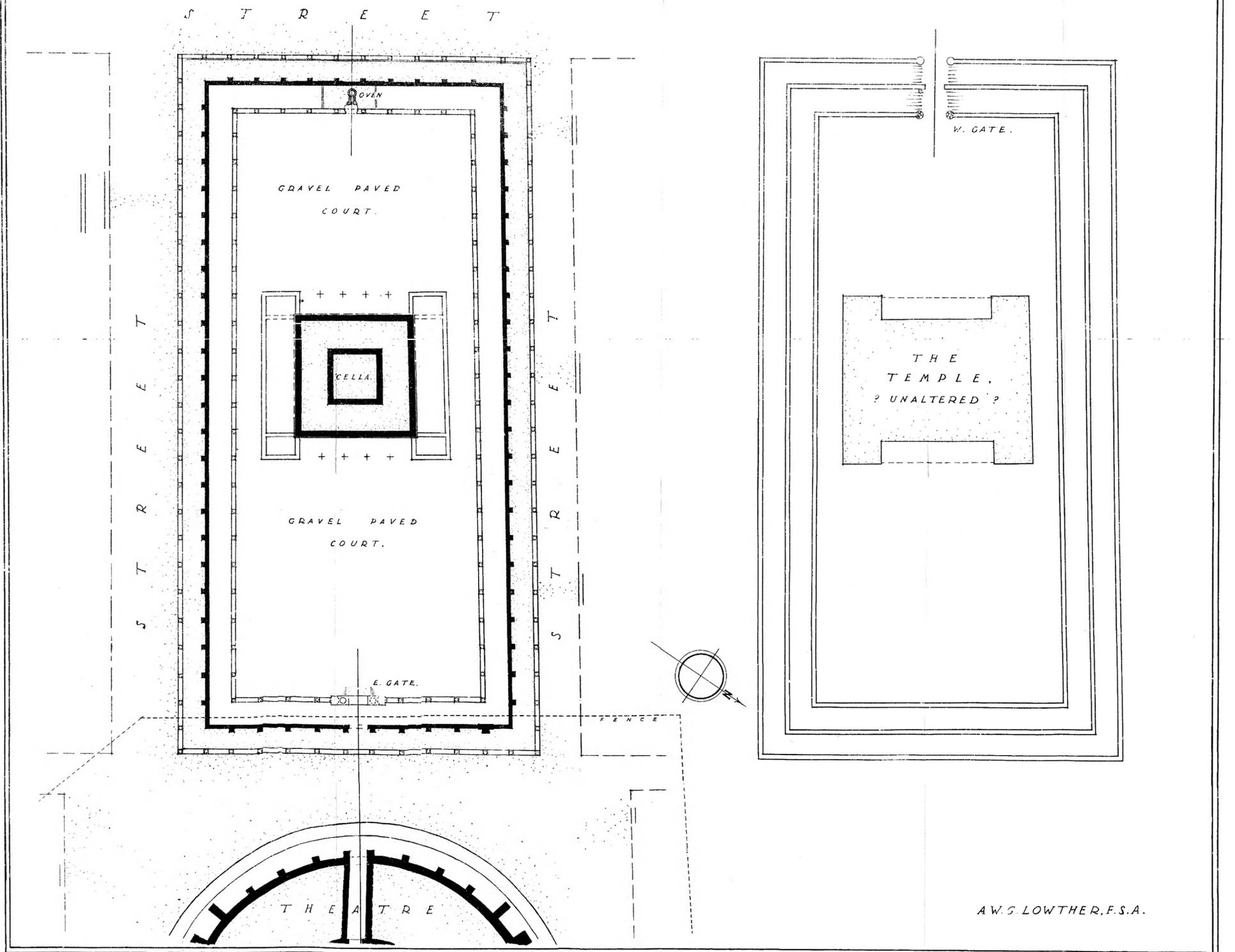


Fig. 1.

VERULAMIUM TEMPLE.



FIG. 2. PART OF THE TWO COLONNADES SURROUNDING THE TEMPLE INSULA.





FIG. 4. THE TEMPLE OVEN AND, IN FOREGROUND, ONE OF THE BRICK COLUMNS OF THE IVth CENTURY GATEWAY.





FIG. 5. THE 4TH CENTURY WEST GATEWAY; VIEW LOOKING TOWARDS THE TEMPLE.



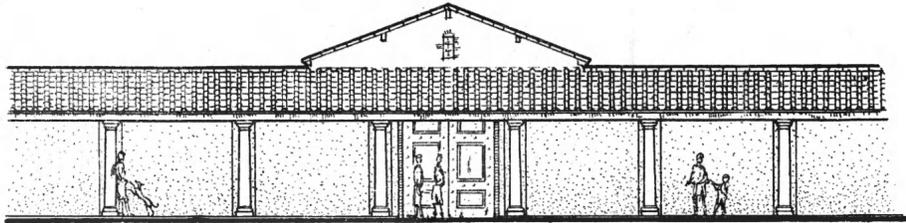


FIG. 6. THE EAST HALF OF THE TEMPLE; VIEW FROM THE CENTRE OF THE NORTH ANNEXE LOOKING EAST

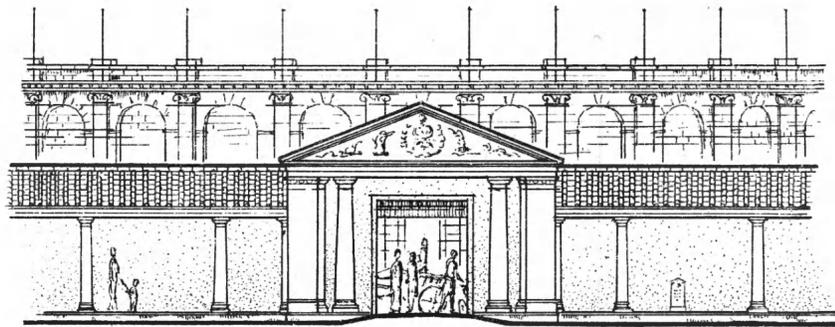


VERULAMIUM, INSULA XVI.
 RECONSTRUCTION OF IIIRD CENTURY EAST GATEWAY
 & COLONNADES SURROUNDING THE TEMENOS.

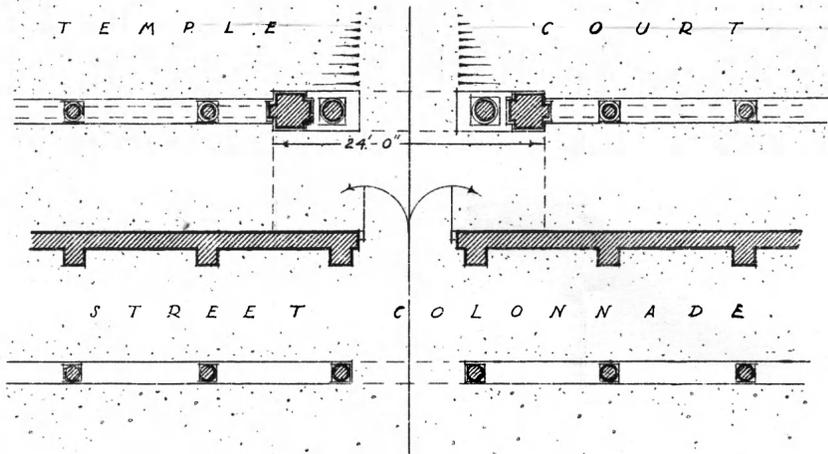
10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80.
 SCALE OF FEET



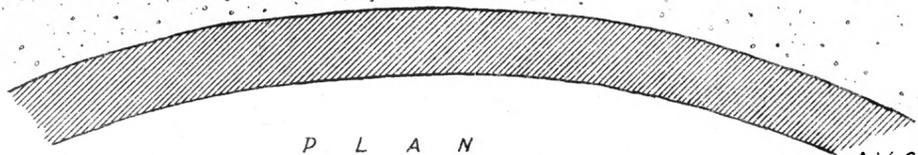
ELEVATION FACING THEATRE



INTERNAL ELEVATION OF E. GATE.



THE THEATRE PIAZZA



P L A N

A.W.G.L.

Fig. 3.



ally 19ft. square. In date it was found to be late first or early second century; somewhere about 100 A.D.

Late in the third century, annexes 12ft. 6in. in width were added to its north and south sides. These projected 10ft. beyond the outer walls of the original building, at either end, and had almost certainly been linked by porticos (possibly only timber built), but, owing to post-Roman disturbance, this could not be proved. The projecting part of each annexe had, at the east end, been partitioned off by walls 1ft. thick, and it is conjectured that this same arrangement had existed at the west end.

The Temple is symmetrically placed on the long axis of the insula, but nearest to its western end, giving it a larger courtyard on the side of the original entrance than at the back. The gravelled surface of these courtyards slopes down from west to east with the original fall in the ground level, which was considerably steeper than it is at the present time.

Three parallel foundations enclose the temple precincts or "*temenos*" and proved to be of rather more interest than the remains of the actual Temple. The central one, the original boundary wall of late first century or early second century date, was 1ft. 7in. thick and mainly built of dressed chalk blocks set in mortar, and with the angles at the corners of the insula (only that at the south-west angle had survived) built in brick. The outer face is buttressed, the average spacing of these buttresses being 11ft. 10in. centre to centre, and their size 2ft. x 1ft. 6in. They are not bonded to the wall, but are contemporary with it and similarly built, though with a brick course to every course of rubble. Unlike the wall, they have no foundations and are only carried down a few inches below the original surface. The rubble courses of this wall are not horizontal but follow the fairly steep slope of the original ground level, the buttresses stepping down with it.

In the second half of the third century, the period in which the Theatre was rebuilt on a very much larger scale, colonnades were added to both the inside and the outside of this wall (Fig. 2). To reduce the ground slope for these colonnades and, by so doing, make them agree with the higher level at which the Theatre was rebuilt,

the level of the east end of the insula (but not that of the courtyard) was purposely raised. Freshly dug clayey gravel was used for this purpose and, opposite the Theatre, spread to a depth of two feet, gradually thinning out along the sides of the insula, while at the top or west end, the surface was lowered several inches. Foundations, built of flints in mortar, were then laid to serve as sleeper walls for an inner and outer range of columns, and a tile course was laid all along, flush with the new floor level, to make a level surface for these columns. (Similar in construction to the sleeper walls round the inner court of the temple excavated in the previous season.)

The inner colonnade is 11 ft. wide on all but the east side where it is of the same width as the outer, or street colonnade, viz., 10 ft. The original buttressed wall must have been heightened in this period to make up for the alteration in ground level and consequent burying of the foot of the wall on the east side of the insula. No trace of any of the columns had survived, but this is explained by the alterations made in the following period.

In the centre of the east side, facing the Theatre, a monumental gateway was constructed at the same time as the colonnades (Fig. 3). It was 24 ft. wide and had a pier and a column on either side of the opening. The columns had been brick built (four segmental bricks to each course) and 2 ft. 3 in. was the diameter of the lowest course (exclusive of the mortar rendering, which would make it at least 2 ft. 6 in.). This gateway had been demolished in the succeeding period, and all that remained was the foundation, measuring 24 ft. × 3 ft. 6 in., bearing the imprint of one of the columns and part of one of the piers. The difference in level between the floor of the courtyard and that of the colonnades had been overcome by making a sloping ramp, of the width of the opening, sloping down into the courtyard.

Thus, in the second half of the third century, when the Temple was enlarged by the addition of annexes, the temenos enclosure was elaborated by the provision of these colonnades. As stated, this was also the period of the rebuilding of the Theatre and it is probable that the external colonnade was chiefly for the use of those

attending the performances there. Vitruvius states that "colonnades should be built, that shelter may be afforded to spectators in case of rain."

At some date after the construction of these colonnades, since part of the inner sleeper wall had been cut away to receive it, an oven was built in the centre of the inner colonnade at the west end of the temenos (Fig. 4). This oven is of the normal type, but larger than those found in the inner court of the temple excavated in 1933. It is 6ft. long, with a circular bee-hive shaped chamber, 2ft. 3in. in diameter, at the west end, built into the colonnade floor to a depth of 1ft. 6in. The sides are constructed of pieces of brick and blocks of chalk, faced on the inside with a clay rendering that had hardened, with use of the oven, into brick. The upper part was filled with building debris, rammed in compactly and containing a fourth-century coin; the lower part contained charcoal, still preserving the form of billets, several feet long, with which the oven fire had been fed through the horizontal flue. Nothing was found among this charcoal. At the sides, the oven had been shut off from the rest of the colonnade by timber partitions, slots in the gravel floor marking their position.

During the fourth century,² when the theatre was no longer in use, the colonnades were replaced by a somewhat different structure, though it followed the lines of the earlier work which served as a foundation for it. If the columns were not at this period in a state of ruin, they were, in any case, cleared away, together with the tile course below them and the buttressed wall was removed down to ground level. Flint walls, of poor construction, two feet thick were now built in place of them and carried right across where the gateway had been in the previous period. It is probable that the innermost of these three walls was only breast high, supporting a row of posts or dwarf columns, but that the other two were actual walls, with windows or arcaded openings for purposes of light. They were plastered, on the inside surfaces, with pink brick-mortar, lime floated and decorated in colour.

The chief alteration in this period was the destruction of the East Gateway and the formation of a new

²At the time of writing, the coins examined suggest a date ca. 370 A.D. for the final "rebuild."

entrance, centrally placed, at the west end of the insula (Fig. 5). To make this, the oven had to be destroyed and was filled in; possibly a new one was constructed elsewhere, though another oven was not found. The Gate openings, through the new inner and outer walls, were built with engaged columns, one on either side of each opening. The outer pair, flint built and carefully shaped with pieces of broken brick, are 3ft. 6in. in diameter; the inner pair, built of segmental bricks (Fig. 4), are 3ft. in diameter at the lowest course; the intercolumniation in each case being 13ft. 6in. There is little doubt that the bricks used to build the inner columns were those obtained by pulling down the two columns of the East Gate; the tile impressions on the foundation of the latter are the same size as the bricks used in the new work. The bricks are quarter segments, four of them, allowing for a 2-inch mortar joint, producing a true circle of 2ft. 3in. diameter, and they were set thus to form the columns of the East Gate. To form the much larger columns of the new gate, five bricks were used for each course, leaving a gap (in the form of a five-pointed star) between them. The circumference was thus no longer a true circle and the irregularities on the face of the column must have been made good in plaster which has not survived. This thickness of plaster would also make up the difference in diameter between the two pairs of columns, since the outer pair still retain their pink mortar rendering. Only the columns and the inner face of the wall have this pink brick-mortar finish; the outer surface, facing the street, must have been rendered with ordinary sand and lime mortar, which, being softer, has disintegrated.

The level into which these late walls were built consisted of a spread of very black material and contained many fourth-century coins. It equates with the thick layer of dark refuse found in the orchestra of the Theatre, tipped there when it was no longer in use. In several places there were traces of a tiled surface to this layer, but, as it was only a few inches below the present surface, very little of it had survived and that only in a very broken state.

The rebuilt temenos walls were continued across the site of the former East Gate, and some of this rebuilding

had survived to show that no entrance was retained at this point.

There was no evidence of alterations to the Temple in this period. This may merely be due to the fact that the floor surface of the original building had been above the present surface of the field, and of the third-century annexes only the bottom of the foundations remain.

A date for at any rate one of the periods at which the Temple was being looted of its building material was indicated by a silver penny (minted by Roger of Canterbury) of Henry I. This is in mint condition and was found at the bottom of a "robber trench" from which all except the lowest course of the foundations had been removed.

Now, to describe certain points in the work in rather more detail, commencing with the Temple in its original, square form (Fig. 6).

Its walls were 2ft. 6in. thick, both that of the cella and the outer wall. The latter is "free built" to a lower level (about one foot) than the inner wall, suggesting that the floor of the cella was at a higher level than that of the surrounding corridor. Small mosaic tesserae, mainly black and white, were among the debris filling the robber trenches in large quantity, and indicate the nature of the floor when the building was last in use.

Immediately below the surface soil was a thick spread of clayey gravel that had formed the basis of the original floors. It had been put in place, after the walls were built, so as to raise the floors well above the outside level, as seems to be usual with temples of this type (e.g., Harlow, *op. cit.*). Below this gravel were various layers that had been formed prior to the building of the Temple, and into which its foundation trenches had been cut. The lowest of them, which was immediately above the natural gravel subsoil, consisted of a 6-inch layer of dark, sandy soil, in which were found a bronze coin of Cunobelin (this was in almost mint condition), as well as a coin of Tasciovanus (rather worn). Apparently this part of the site had been open farmland, probably tilled, in the early part of the first century A.D.

In this same level were found an iron finger-ring (with the attachment for a bezel, now missing), a bronze brooch and some pottery, all of first-century date.

The walls of the annexes were 2ft. thick, and built with a poor quality of mortar. This was yellower and softer than that used for the original Temple, having a greater proportion of sand in it. The original walls were very well built; the angles, being formed in brick, had been robbed to a lower level, but traces of the brick courses had survived and showed these to have been carefully bonded into the flint work.

A considerable amount of coloured wall-plaster (deep red and olive green were the only two colours) was found against the foot of the outer wall of the original building. This implies that this outer wall was actually a wall built up to some height and not, as is claimed for some of the temples of this type, merely a sleeper wall serving as foundation for a row of columns. That it had a series of arched openings, with intervening piers, is the more likely.

As regards the roof, a large number of pieces of roof tiles of an unusual make were found both in the robber trenches and accumulated round the outside of the building. These are of a pale buff-coloured clay, but, to make them appear like the normal red brick tiles, were surfaced on all faces with a red colouring material, apparently at the same time as they were made. In size they correspond with the more ordinary type. Buff-coloured bricks from other parts of the site of Verulamium have also been dateable to about 100 A.D. Some bricks of this type are among those used to form the bonding courses in the buttressed wall enclosing the temenos.

It will be seen from this account that nothing was found which threw any light on the question of the deity to whom this Temple was dedicated. It is possible that evidence of some kind which would settle this point is still on the site; this could only be determined by clearing the whole area of the insula (a matter of rather more than an acre) which could not be attempted at the present time. The two courtyards were only investigated to the extent of one trench across each to eliminate the possibility of their containing any structures. It is here that the remains of altars or votive deposits might be found, as they were in the case of the temple excavated in the previous year, but where the comparatively small area to be dealt with made it possible to clear the whole site.