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**On the Recent Discovery of Remains of the Foundations of the
Keep of Bristol Castle and of the Ancient Wells adjacent, with
Notes of the Contents of one of the Wells**

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ON THE RECENT DISCOVERY OF REMAINS OF THE
FOUNDATIONS OF THE KEEP OF BRISTOL
CASTLE, AND OF THREE ANCIENT WELLS
ADJACENT, WITH NOTES OF THE
CONTENTS OF ONE OF THE
WELLS.

By S. H. SWAYNE, M.R.C.S., CLIFTON.

By favour of Messrs. Llewellyn & James, Engineers and Copper-smiths, Castle Green, and Castle Street, Bristol, I have been furnished with particulars of the discovery during last year (1878), of some remains of the foundations of the Keep of the Castle of Bristol, and of the clearing out of one of three ancient wells, situated in the basement of Messrs. Llewellyn and James' premises in the Castle, which have been recently re-built. The measurements and description have been supplied to me by Mr. R. H. Leaker, clerk of the works.

The foundations and the three wells were found at a level of ten feet below the roadway in Castle Green. The masonry, of well-jointed ashlar, formed a solid floor of about eight feet thick, and of nearly square shape, and terminated towards Castle Green in a sharp, well-defined, edge, but on the opposite side it was rough and broken, indicating that, originally, it extended further in the direction of what is now Castle Street. At a few feet from this floor the first of the three wells was discovered, and, in a line from this one towards the river, were two other wells about 80 feet distant from each other. The first well was the only one carefully examined. This is 6 feet in diameter at the top, and is roughly cut through the sandstone rock, the upper part being lined with uncoursed masonry. The total depth is $38\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and at the time of examination there were some feet of water at the bottom. Filling the well to the top were various layers of building rubbish, worked and rough stone, twelve large stone balls, a quantity of fragments of broken jars and pitchers, decayed

wood and iron, numerous bones and skulls of domestic animals, and, at least, one entire human skeleton. Among the remains of pottery are four narrow necks belonging, apparently, to rounded jars, made without lips, of common red ware, about 7 or 8 inches long and $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide at the top. Most of the pieces, however, belonged to ordinary pitchers of rough earthenware, coarsely ornamented on the exterior with lines running in different patterns, either horizontally or vertically. The handles, also, which are somewhat flattened, are marked by rough indentations, or crossing lines. The spouts of most of the pitchers are bridged over by the rim, so that the fluid passed through a hole in the top edge of the pitcher. The borders of the bottoms of the pitchers are frequently scalloped with a running cord-pattern. Some of the jars were large and broad-mouthed, but none of these are at all entire. The most remarkable ornament upon any of the pitchers is a horse-shoe in relief on one of them, with the nail-heads well defined and the heel of the shoe slightly raised. There are, at least, a dozen necks of pitchers among the fragments. The glazing, which is very coarse, is either darkish green or brown, in color.

I submitted specimens of the pottery to Mr. William Edkins, of Charlotte Street, Bristol; who considered them to be of the common domestic pottery of about the 12th or 13th century.

The wood and iron work is greatly decayed, and consists chiefly of the remains of buckets and their handles. One piece of iron, on a fragment of a staff of wood, is of the shape of a boat-hook. With these three rather large keys were found, also some irregular lumps of lead and a few oyster shells.

The bones, which are very numerous, are chiefly those of domestic animals, as the ox, goat, boar, dog, cat, rat, barn-door fowl, and a larger bird of the size of a turkey. The long bones of the ox, goat, and boar, are mostly broken, but those of the dog, cat, and fowl are entire.

A human skeleton was found, the bones of which are nearly complete. It is that of a young person, probably from 10 to 15 years of age. The epiphyses of the long-bones are separated from the shafts by decay, and the skull, which is well-formed, is entire

with the exception of the loss of a considerable portion of the occiput, which was probably crushed by the superincumbent weight of rubbish after the head had become separated from the neck. An imaginative person might be tempted, perhaps, to conjure up some tale of violence in connection with this skeleton, but there are no marks about it to support such an idea. Amongst the bones I found also a human radius and ulna belonging to another individual, who was evidently of adult age.

The stone balls are roughly cut from red or grey sandstone. They vary considerably in size ; the smaller ones range from 16 to 23½ inches in circumference, the larger ones from 30 to 38½ in.—one of the latter, of oval shape and transversely broken, is 30 inches in circumference and 11 inches long.

In a note to Mr. Nicholls' paper on "Bristol Castle," in the "Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society for 1878-9," Vol. III., p. 188, it is suggested that these balls were intended, respectively, for the 5-pounder and 63-pounder guns used in the 17th century, the latter of which, he says, were denominated "Canon Royall." This name appears, however, to have been used as early as the beginning of the 15th century for cannon carrying balls of 48lbs.¹ These large stone balls were probably intended to be discharged from mortars.

The upper layers of rubbish in this well may have been thrown in at the time the castle was demolished in 1654 ; but I think that the old iron work, pottery and bones had, probably, gradually accumulated, owing to the well being no longer used for water supply.

The whole of the above remains are deposited in the Museum of the Bristol Museum and Library.

Measurements of the successive layers of material in the well, commencing at the top.

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---------|
| Rubbish, earth, and rough stones | - | - | - | - | 6 feet. |
| Rough and squared Caen stone | - | - | - | - | 2 " |
| Five small stone balls | - | - | - | - | 2 " |
| Rough and square Caen stone | - | - | - | - | 3 " |

¹ Encyclopædia Britannica, 1815.

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|--|---|---|---|-------|-----------|
| Fine sifted building rubbish | - | - | - | - | 3 feet |
| Rough and worked stone | - | - | - | - | 2½ „ |
| Necks of jars, &c. | - | - | - | - | 1½ „ |
| Building rubbish, and rough and worked stone | - | - | - | - | 10 „ |
| Seven large rough-hewn stone balls | - | - | - | - | 2 „ |
| Iron and wood-work | - | - | - | - | 1 „ |
| Red-ware jugs, wood, and bones of animals | - | - | - | - | 1 „ |
| Broken pottery, and human skeleton | - | - | - | - | 2½ „ |
| Do. largest pieces | - | - | - | - | 2 „ |
| | | | | | <hr/> |
| | | | | TOTAL | 3S½ feet. |

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