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The Roman Villa, Tockington Park (Second Notice)

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THE ROMAN VILLA, TOCKINGTON PARK.

SECOND NOTICE.

Continued from Vol. XII., p. 169.

BY SIR JOHN MACLEAN, F.S.A.,

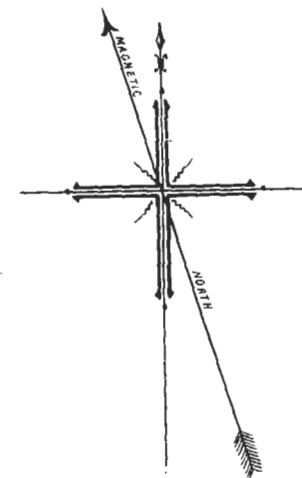
Vice-President of the Royal Archæological Institute, Honorary Member of the Royal Institution of Cornwall, &c.

ON the 22nd May, 1888, we resumed the excavation of the Roman Villa at Tockington Park, and, in the hope of discovering an entrance to the building on the south side, of which we considered the sculptured stone found in the rick-yard (*Pl. IX. fig. 1, Vol. XII.*) might be an indication, we thought it desirable, in the first place, to explore that locality. On the following day, about 6 feet from the south edge of the pavement of the corridor (Room xxiii), where it is crossed by the fence of the rick-yard, a pillar of a hypocaust was found. It was about 8ins. square in plan, built of tiles of that size and about 2ins. thick, and was 2ft. 6ins. high. This was very encouraging. Continuing the excavations along the eastern side of the fence several other similar pillars were found, not running parallel with the fence, but trending slightly towards the south-east in the direction of the spot where the stone above alluded to was uncovered (Room xxiv). The pillars did not extend further eastward, and the other portion of the chamber must have been on the western side of the fence, and thus destroyed in making the pond, now in the farmyard. The only objects of interest found thus far were two pieces of channelled stone, probably formed for conducting water.

Having left two men at work with instructions to open the ground eastwards and southwards from the hypocaust we visited the villa again on the 1st of June. Our expectation that the

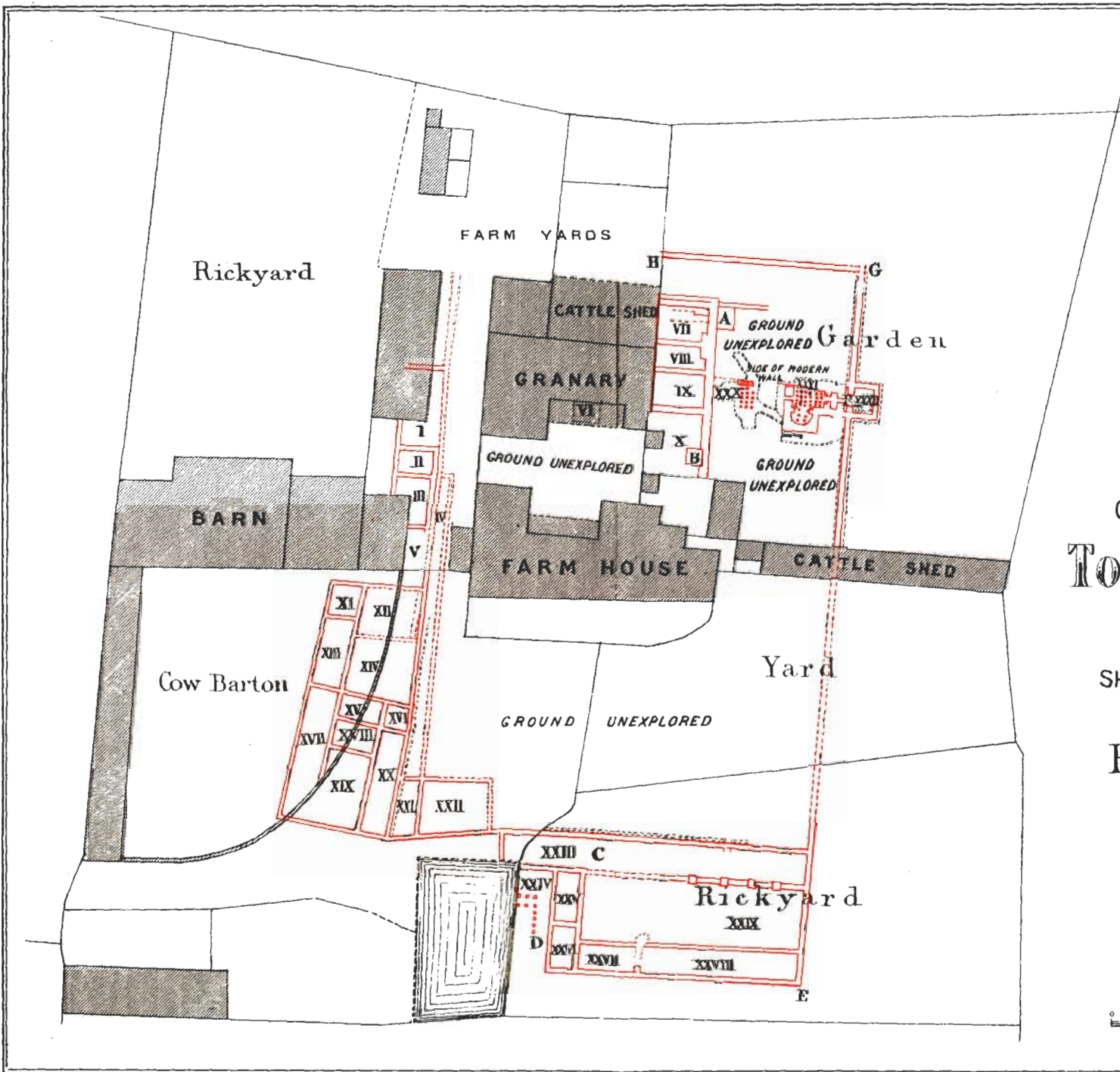
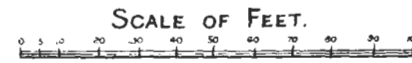
hypocaust chamber might extend further southwards was disappointed. No remains of an external wall appeared on that side. Some flag-stone pavement, very rough and uneven, adjoins the two rows of pillars, but on the north side the end of the foundation of a wall was found adjoining the pavement of the corridor. Upon a square piece of masonry was found a stone step, much worn, lying transversely. A considerable quantity of loose tesserae, white, red, and blue, some shards of black ware of different qualities, all rather coarse, and other coarse pottery, and some small bits of samian, part of a hone, a good many building tiles, similar to those used for the hypocaust pillars, a few pieces of striated flanged tiles, and some pieces of charcoal were all that rewarded us so far.

We again visited the works on the 16th June, and found extensive foundations discovered since our last visit, the walls on the south side of rooms numbered xxvi and xxvii being from 3 to 4 feet high, fragments of black pottery, some pieces of painted wall plaster (green) and flanged striated tiles had been turned up. On our visit on the 23rd June, the foundations had been further developed, and what appeared to be the eastern boundary wall had been reached. The suite of three rooms on the south side xxvi, xxvii and xxviii had been explored, and they measured together 78ft. in length. These communicated by openings in the walls 5ft. wide, but these openings had been walled up. The voussoirs of the two arches were found. In the excavations of these rooms were found large quantities of oyster shells, broken tiles, some of them flanged and striated. There was also found a portion of a mill-stone, similar to that found in the corridor last year. The diameter would be about 2 ft. 6 ins., and, probably, as that of the radiated stones in the corridor, before mentioned (Vol. XII. p.167) were of the same diameter those stones formed the base of the mill. Another circular stone was dug up. It is of a convex form, 17ins. in diameter, perforated with a round hole in the centre, where it is 4 ins. thick, tapering off to the circumference, where it is only 2 ins. thick. The central hole is larger on one side than on the other, and appears to have been partially broken through. Many large iron nails and a quantity of fragments of black pottery of



PLAN
 OF THE HOMESTEAD AT
TOCKINGTON PARK,
 County of Gloucester,
 SHEWING THE REMAINS
 OF THE
ROMAN VILLA.

ENGR'G BY BROAD ST BRISTOL



rather good quality, apparently Upchurch ware (*Plate XIV. fig. 3*) were picked up. There was also found a boar's tusk, 5½ ins. long, and fashioned as a needle (See *Plate XIV., figs. 5, 6 and 7*). The partition wall between Rooms xxvii and xxviii on the north of the opening has been broken down, as has also been the adjoining portions of the north wall of these rooms, and a deep hole dug on the site with many large boulder-like stones in it. Here were also found a great quantity of tesserae, which, doubtless, formed a part of the floor of the western portion of space xxix.

On visiting the Villa again on the 5th July, we found that the men, continuing the excavations from Room xxv. to xxviii., had fully opened xxvii. and xxviii. No trace was found of any walls branching out on the north side of these rooms, and this north wall was not bonded into the east wall of Rooms xxviii. and xxix. Room xxviii. has a pavement of rough slab stones, and, external to the wall on the north, there is a piece of similar flooring. In the excavations was found a circular convex stone similar to that before described; though somewhat less, but the central hole is not pierced through. A stone weight was also found. It is of a quadrangular form, with the edges chamfered off, and it tapers from the bottom to the top, in which a hole is bored to fix a ring or other handle. This hole has been broken through and the handle lost. An incision is made in the stone to affix a piece of cord or wire for lifting it. In its present state it weighs 16¾ lbs. Probably in its original state its weight was 18lbs., perhaps 20 lbs. A whetstone was also found, as were other sharpening stones of different forms. A quantity of broken tiles, shards of pottery of various textures and colour. A large quantity of blue and white tesserae was also found at the western end of the space marked xxix. mixed with the soil, indicating that this space had been paved with mosaic work, but no dividing wall could be discovered; bones and oyster shells were numerous.

Continuing the excavation 20 feet further northwards at the eastern end of xxix., the foundation of the eastern wall was again met with and traced about 7 ft. and then lost.

We now determined to explore the ground north of the corridor at the north-west corner of the rick-yard, but nothing was found of any importance. The ground was then tested on the north side of the great corridor, and allowing 2 ft. for the breadth of the wall of the corridor, at 1 foot beyond was found a drain of flat stones set on edge, running parallel to the wall, precisely similar to the drain found in the principal farm-yard last autumn, running north and south. It does not appear to have been covered. This continued 12 feet by the wall of the corridor. Returning then to the big hole before mentioned, a search was made for the northern wall of ROOM XXIX., which was soon found. The first special object noticed was a thick flat stone 2 feet square, evidently forming the foundation of a column, by the side of which was a small section of what appeared to be a column or wooden post. It was 17ins. long, and 10ins. in diameter. At one end is a square socket as if to fasten it to another similar piece, and at intervals of 7ft. three other similar foundations were found. Probably they were bases for wooden posts to support a roof. This wall was the continuation of the south wall of the corridor, and the parallel wall was found at 10 ft. distant.

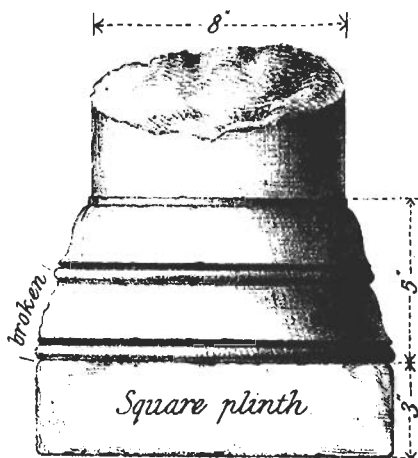
During the latter part of these operations, Mr. Smith, in digging in his garden, observed some indications of a wall on the eastern side of the rooms already opened out there. He accordingly dug deeper, and about 3 ft. below the surface came upon a piece of tessellated pavement, which he was good enough to report to us at once. On the 14th July we visited the place and found that the pavement was constructed of blue and white tesserae set in the fylfot pattern, and, apparently, such a border as we had found surrounding other pavements in the villa. Upon an examination it was found to be only a fragment a few feet in length and about 2 ft. in breadth. We then continued the excavations a few feet further southwards and found that there was a hot air chamber under this pavement, and that the floor had given way and fallen into the chamber. As the ground was cropped we refrained from pursuing this discovery until the crops should have been removed. Moreover, Mr. Smith desired to withdraw the men from

this work to assist in his hay and harvest operations. The excavations therefore were suspended for the time.

The continuance of wet weather prevented work being resumed until the middle of October. The first step taken was to examine the ground in the garden already partially opened, on the east side of Room numbered ix. on the ground plan (*Plate XIII.*) We were disappointed to find that the pavement discovered in the summer reached very little further than we had previously seen, but on extending the excavations southwards and eastwards a series of thirteen hypocaust pillars were found *in situ*, two of them being circular and built of stone, and also several flue tiles (*see Plate XIV., fig. 4.*) The tesserae of the floor had fallen into this chamber. The small piece of pavement and the first row of hypocaust pillars, in this Room numbered xxx. on plan, which were 8 ins. square in plan, and built of tiles of that size, and 3 ft. high, were just 10 ft. east of the room above mentioned. Continuing the excavations eastwards at a distance of 24 ft. from Room ix., we came upon the foundation of a wall running north and south. This wall, however, was not united to the wall on the north. There was an opening of 8 ins., and following the wall southwards at the distance of 2 ft. 6 ins., we found an opening of 2 ft. from which, as far as we traced it, the wall continued solid. On the east side of this wall we found a small room terminated on the south side in a semicircular apse, 3 ft. in diameter. The room itself was 16 ft. 6 ins. square, including the apse, with 32 hypocaust pillars in it, similar to those already described. The space through the middle of the room, between the tiles, was wider than elsewhere, as if to admit of a passage between the rows (*see Room xxxi., Plate XIII.*) On the east beyond a narrow sort of passage (*see Plan*), we found another small room, 7 ft. by 8 ft. 9 ins. (Room xxxii). The bottom was covered with wood-ashes, very closely compressed, and 7 or 8 ins. thick, the fibre of the wood being very apparent. The room was, probably, nothing more than an ash-hole.

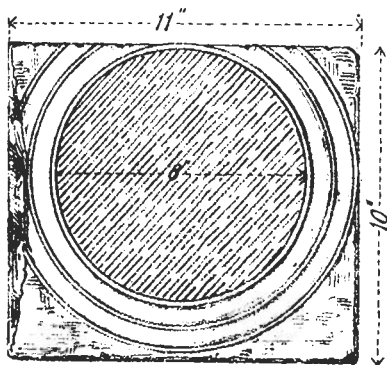
From the central passage before mentioned on the western side of this room, extended a row of flat stones, laid in a curved

DETAILS ROMAN VILLA, TOCKINGTON PARK.



ELEVATION
Fig 1.

BASE OF COLUMN.



PLAN
Fig 2.

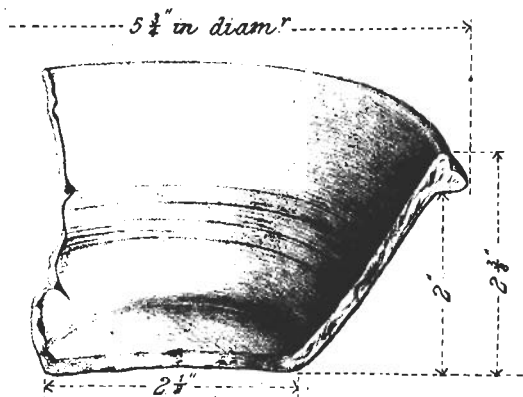


Fig 3.



FLUE TILE.
Fig 4.

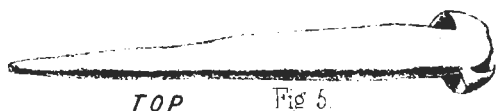


Fig 5.

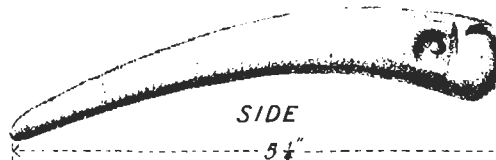


Fig 6.



Section thro' Eye
Fig 7

form, reaching to the south wall. The purpose for which this was intended is not very evident, possibly it was the bottom of a flue. Proceeding southwards from the western pier in this room, (F) is a wall parallel with and extending to the south end (E) of the eastern wall of the excavation in the rick-yard (Room xxviii), and from the pier on the north side of xxxi is a wall in a straight line with that just described, which extends northwards a distance of 41ft. to G. No offset has been found on the external side of this wall, except the ash-hole. From the most southern angle in the rick-yard to (G) on the north, the distance is 240ft. This, we conceive, was the outer wall on the eastern side of the villa. The south and west sides are defined on the plan with apparent clearness, and upon further examination we found a wall at a right angle with this wall at the north extremity extending to a place marked (H) at the western wall of the garden. It probably extends further, but the ground beyond the wall has not been examined.

The relics found in the excavations were of trifling interest. The most important of them is the small base of a column, the mouldings of which are unusual and very good (see *Pl. XIV. figs. 1 and 2* elevation and plan). It was found at (F) the entrance to the ash-hole, and appeared to be *in situ*. Two round stone balls roughly made were also found. The largest, $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins. in diameter, and weighing 12 ozs. avoirdupois, the smaller one 2 ins. in diameter, and weighing 6 ozs. Besides these, there were fragments of bucks' horns, in abundance, and bones of oxen, sheep, &c., &c., fragments of building and other tiles, flue tiles (*Plate XIV. fig. 4*), a great quantity of loose tesserae, blue and white or buff, some of which adhered to each other by the cement in pieces many inches square.

The public purpose, if any, for which this large building was erected is still very obscure. The weather during the summer months of 1888 proved very unfavourable for making excavations in the stiff clayey soil of Tockington Park, nevertheless a considerable additional area of the site of the villa was examined. The general plan has now been pretty definitely disclosed. It

would seem to have been in form an irregular trapezium, measuring about 240 ft. from north to south and 160 ft. from east to west, about one half of which area only has as yet been explored. The result of the excavations does not throw much light upon the uses to which the building was applied, and conjectures and guesses would be worse than useless. The fact that the site of the villa was selected, perhaps several centuries ago, as the site of the homestead of the farm was, probably, the chief cause of its almost entire defacement. With the exception of a few yards of Roman masonry on the southern boundary, and a still less quantity on the western, scarcely anything except the rubble foundations remain, and these, naturally, shew no indication of doors or other openings. We do not even know where was the chief entrance to the building. All that the excavations have disclosed to us is that it, at least the chief part of it, is of a very early period of the Roman occupation of Britain, as early, probably, as the first century, and that, from the number, elegance, and general character of the mosaic pavements, it was the residence of some Roman official of high rank. The hypocaust chambers recently discovered (Rooms xxx. and xxxi.) would indicate some extensive heating apparatus and bath accommodation suitable to so large an establishment.

We should imagine from the plan and other indications that the original building had, perhaps, additions made to it, possibly more than once, and we are inclined to think that the southern portion, situated on the low ground, was appropriated to the slaves and labourers who cultivated the farm.

In conclusion we must repeat our thanks to Mr. Richard Smith and Mr. F. Judge for the continuation of their obliging assistance.