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Bristol Archaeological Notes For 1900

by J. E. Pritchard
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BRISTOL ARCHÆOLOGICAL NOTES FOR 1900.

BY JOHN E. PRITCHARD, F.S.A.,

Honorary Secretary for Bristol.

"In times past Archæology has already gained much from digging; and in times to come it is doubtless destined to gain yet infinitely more from a systematized use of this mode of research. For the truth is, that beneath the surface of the earth on which we tread—often not above two or three feet below the surface—there undoubtedly lie, in innumerable spots and places—buried, and waiting only for disinterment,—antiquarian relics of the most valuable and important character."

PRACTICAL excavating has been the key-note of much Archæological work during the last two years of the 19th century, as if to make amends for past neglect; and I think, on the whole, the period may be looked back upon as an eventful one, for several members of this Society have been engaged upon important diggings on Roman sites at Brislington and Caerwent; and I have had the singular good fortune, in addition, of watching throughout the whole of the twelve months another excavation in the heart of the city, exhibiting work of the Norman and Mediæval periods, which has, also, brought to light traces of *non-historic* times—one of the most important discoveries yet made upon the ancient site of Bristol—whilst other members interested in such investigations, not able to take an active share in practical work itself, have liberally contributed to the funds.

It is to be hoped that systematic work of this kind may be continued in this neighbourhood from time to time, whenever the opportunity occurs;¹ and members must not forget the remarks of Mr. G. B. Witts, the Society's

¹ See *Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club*, vol. i., pp. 62, 66.

president in 1897, as to the number of Roman villas still unexplored in Gloucestershire.¹

The first day of the year inaugurated the excavations at the Brislington Roman villa, which was discovered in 1899.² Early on that Monday morning, Mr. A. E. Hudd, F.S.A., Mr. A. T. Martin, F.S.A., and myself met upon the site, at the corner of Wick Lane, situated on the main Bath road, about 2½ miles from Bristol Bridge, and, with the labourers we had engaged, commenced the digging. Within an hour we struck our first wall, and from that moment the plan of the buildings developed in a most interesting manner. The work was continued by us, day by day, for several weeks, Mr. Hudd being in almost daily attendance, and then, finding that the excavations would be somewhat extensive, it was necessary to make other arrangements, as we were each of us engaged upon the Caerwent explorations, and it was impossible to give the requisite time and obtain adequate funds for both works at the same time. We therefore approached Mr. W. R. Barker, Chairman of the Bristol Museum Committee, who thoroughly acquiesced in our plan, and, after consultation with his colleagues, undertook to continue the work, to which the Committee had already contributed, on behalf of the city. Mr. Barker will fully describe the excavations and the objects found.

Our thanks are due to Mr. H. T. M. C. Gwynn, the Chairman, and his co-directors of the Bristol and District Land Company, owners of the soil, for the ready permission granted to explore the villa, and for their generosity in presenting all finds to the Bristol Museum.

The demolition of the houses upon the line of the Norman wall of Bristol, in Wellington Street, followed by the necessary excavations for the foundations of the new factory now being erected by Messrs. J. S. Fry and Sons, mentioned in my last annual paper to the Clifton Antiquarian Club,³ has continued throughout the year.

¹ See *Transactions*, vol. xx., pp. 349, 350.

² See *Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club*, vol. iv., p. 262.

³ See *Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club*, vol. iv., pp. 160, 259.

The Norman foundations were discovered intact the whole distance from St. John's slope to the Pithay, and with the exception of a short length—abutting on the Pithay—the entire stretch of walling has been destroyed. In no part was the remaining masonry standing over eight feet in height; but the thickness, which was not consistently regular as in the case of most Roman masonry, was found to average six feet.

Numerous relics of bygone times have been found, during the course of the work, principally without the wall, including many specimens from a veritable 17th century "rubbish-pit," which was cut into at a spot midway between the slopes to which I have referred; and the following description will doubtless be interesting. My thanks are due to Mr. Dowling, Clerk of the Works, for his unvarying courtesy throughout the year.

LIST OF FINDS.

A SKULL was discovered in February beneath the foundations of a 17th century house, which stood close to the outer side of the Norman wall, about 35 feet from the Pithay slope. There were indications that the entire skeleton had lain at this spot; but, unfortunately, the remainder of the bones had almost entirely perished.

I sent this specimen to our member, Dr. John Beddoe, F.R.S., and that eminent craniologist kindly reported as follows:—

Skull found beneath a 17th century house in the Pithay, Bristol, sent to me by Mr. John E. Pritchard, F.S.A.

<i>Lengths—</i>	MM.	<i>Breadths—</i>	MM.
Clabello-maximum ...	177	Zygomatic	130
Fronto inial	170	Supra-auricular	114
Clabello-inial	167	Maximum, which is	
Ophryo maximum ...	174	parietal	137
Facial (nasio-alveolar)...	66	Mastoid	119
<i>Breadths—</i>		<i>Heights—</i>	
Fronto-minimum	95	Basio-bregmatic	124
Stephanic	114	Basio-maximum	129

<i>Arcs—</i>	MM.	<i>Length—</i>	MM.
Circumference... ..	512	Basis cranii	101
Longitudinal frontal, 115		Basio-alviolar	97
parietal 125		Nose, 47 and 23; Fora-	
occipital 72 + 42 = 114		men, 33 and 29	
—	354	External orbital breadth,	
Transverse	308	109; orbits, 35-31; inter-	
Pre-auricular superciliar	280	space, 26	

Cranial Index, 77.4; Altitudinal, 70; Alti-lat, 90.5;
 Nasal, 48.9; Orbital, 88.6; Facial, 50.7.

Male adult, young or middle-aged. Vertical aspect, oval; phœnozygous—lateral aspect, flat and low; posterior aspect, cylindrical; no prognathism; brows and cheekbones prominent; nose probably thin and high; forehead rather low; parietal and supra-occipital regions full and rounded; skull on the whole small, but well-filled. Though dating from the 17th century at latest, it has nothing unmodern in its character, and leans more to an Anglo-Saxon than to a British type.

March 26th, 1900.

JOHN BEDDOE.

COINS.

ROMAN SILVER DENARIUS. "Iulia Maesa (died A.D. 223)."

obv. IVLIA . MAESA . AVG. Head to *right*.

rev. FECVNDITAS.

A woman seated between two children, holding a flower and the hasta.

This was found on January 18th, in the foundations of a house, just within the wall, at a spot about fifty feet from the Pithay slope.

ROMAN SECOND BRASS. "Maximianus (286-305)."

obv. MAXIMIANVS . NOB . CAES. Head of Emperor to *right*.

rev. GENIO . POPVLI . ROMANI.

Genius standing with a wreath in right hand and cornucopia in left.


I witnessed the discovery of this piece on July 26th, at a depth of 11 feet below the roadway, at the corner of All Saints' Street and All Saints' Avenue, in blue clay deposit.

These two coins are the only Roman objects discovered in these excavations, and it is difficult to explain how they found their way to this spot, as we have, as yet, no evidence of actual Roman occupation of this ancient site. It is just possible that the coin of Maximianus was dropped in the vicinity during Roman times, when the land surrounding Bristol was a great marsh.

Two green-glazed GROTESQUE FIGURES, representing monsters, which had probably formed the ornament of a mediæval water jug of 13th or 14th century.

A LEAD BULLET, of the Siege of 1643 or 1645, found imbedded in the mortar of a joint in the Norman wall.

A GUINEA WEIGHT of Queen Anne's reign.

Several fragments of blue salt glazed, stoneware mugs, bearing  (George I).

Numerous Bristol DELFT DRUGGISTS' POTS,¹ white-glazed on red and whitish pastes, in various sizes—1 in. high by 1 in. diameter, 1½ ins. by 1½ ins., 2 ins. by 2¾ ins., and 2½ ins. by 1¾ ins. Eighteenth century.

Two Bristol DELFT TILES,¹ composed of soft, yellowish clay, part of a set of four. The set-design consisting principally of squares and diamonds, upon a white ground, around a scalloped circle; the colour of pattern is a dull mauve, edged by light blue lines. Eighteenth century.

Two small GLASS PHIALS, 18th and 19th century, quite perfect.

French COLONIAL COIN.

obv. LOVIS . XVI . R . DE . FR . ET . DENAV .

rev. COLONIE . DE . CAYENNE . 2 SOVS . 1782.

FROM THE RUBBISH PIT.

An early 17th century seal-top BRASS SPOON, with hexagonal stem. Maker's mark "G," length 6¼ inches.

Bristol circular FARTHING, 1652,² with the additional

¹ See Owen (Hugh), *Two Centuries in Ceramic Art in Bristol*.

² See *Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club*, vol. iv., pp. 159, 161, 259, 261.

letters "R.I." struck over the ship on the reverse. A very uncommon type.

Several other farthings of various dates, in worn condition.

Charles II. FARTHINGs, 1673 and 1675 mintages.

CLAY TOBACCO PIPES, bearing the following makers' names and initials on the heel. A valuable addition to those previously recorded¹:—

JOHN HOWELL FLOWER HVNT JOHN HVNT

NATH HOWELL JEFFRY HVNT THO HVNT

A "gauntlet."

A "rose."

R.B.

F.H.

R.N.

E.C.

I.H.

H.S.

N.C.

F.I.

T.S.

W.C.

R.K.

W.W.

P.E.

T.M.

ESX. (probably Essex).

The Hunts were a Bristol family. I find from the City records that Flower and John were admitted "freemen" in 1651. We therefore get a fairly accurate date of the small barrel-shape pipes made by that family and others in the 17th century.

A fragment of a DELFT POTTERY DISH,² 8½ ins. in diameter, with blue and yellow decoration upon a glazed white ground, bearing the following in the centre:—

I. E.

1647.

Numerous fragments of coarse slip-decorated pottery of different designs; one piece bearing a large raised letter **W**.

A yellow glazed PIPKIN.

Fragments of Venetian Glass.

I have chronicled the finds from the "pit" separately, as it is most interesting to notice that the dates of the various specimens corroborate one another.

¹ See *Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club*, vol. iv., pp. 159, 161, 259, 271.

² See Hodgkin's *Early English Pottery*, 1891.

On the *east* side of the Pithay slope deep excavating has also been continued at intervals during the year, principally upon the site of the third, fourth, and fifth gabled houses—that is to say, counting from the top in descending, on the right-hand side. An interesting court-yard, or possibly a passage or roadway, formed of pebbles and square pitching, was found beneath the recent level, at the rear of the second house, and outside, though extending under the foundations of the wall of Messrs. Lipton's back premises. Whether it had any connection with the upper Pithay Gateway, or only formed part of the premises of a later house, built close to the city wall, it is hardly possible to decide. At the time of the discovery, Mr. Drake, architect for a new Mission Hall, which may possibly be erected upon this site in the Pithay, took great pains with Mr. Martin and myself to solve the mystery. The stone-work and mortar apparently belonged to the 13th or 14th century.

The excavations at this spot have brought to light some curious and interesting specimens, which deserve careful recording, as the entire site is one of the most fascinating that has been opened up within the area of the ancient city during the century.

LIST OF FINDS.

More fragments of NORMAN and MEDIEVAL POTTERY,¹ comprising a fine series of handles, lips, rims, body-ornamentation and bases of various vessels.

A deep circular dish of HISPANO-MOORESCO² POTTERY, decorated with light blue and "copper-lustre" ornamentation upon a cream-colour ground, and terra-cotta paste. Period: 13th or 14th century. The specimen is made up of thirty-one fragments, and there are four other pieces which cannot be joined to it. The dish originally measured 17 ins.

¹ See *Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club*, vol. iv., pp. 160, 260.

² See *Litchfield (F.) Pottery and Porcelain*, pp. 9, 10, 166. [This dish has since been presented by Mr. Pritchard to the British Museum.—ED.]



PLATE IX.—HISPANO-MOESCO DISH
FOUND IN BRISTOL.

in diameter. The fragments were found at a depth of 10 ft. below the cellar level of one of the gabled houses in the Pithay, and I imagine it was originally brought over as a present to a Bristol merchant. I also found fragments of four other Spanish lustre-decorated vessels.

MEDIEVAL TILES. About fifteen fragments of various encaustic tiles, 13th to 16th centuries, from the old city churches.

A fragment of GREEN GLAZED POTTERY, evidently 15th century, bearing the monogram "MF" incised in the paste.

A BRONZE SPUR, probably 16th century, with octagon-shaped neck, imperfect, no rowel.

A salt-glazed STONE-WARE FLASK, oval barrel shape; size $4\frac{1}{2}$ ins. long, the oval end measuring $2\frac{3}{4}$ ins. by $1\frac{5}{8}$ ins. This is undoubtedly *Fulham* pottery. At one end on a raised label appears the following name and address in three lines:

Sinclair, Mile End Gate

with a small bung-hole under. This was found 10 ft. below the level of one of the gabled houses.

COINS.

A FRENCH DENIER, of probably 13th century.

Elizabeth, *Sixpence*, usual type, 1582.

Charles II. de Gonzaga; a *copper coin* struck as Duc de Nevers, A.D. 1614.

James II. gun money, *Shilling*, September, 1689.

And sundry worn English and Spanish silver and copper pieces.

But the most interesting find of all, and one of immense value to local archæologists, occurred on the 25th of April. At a depth of fully 12 ft. beneath the cellar level of one of the gabled houses, that stood below the "Prince of Wales" public-house, in the PITHAY, some objects of apparently PRE-HISTORIC TIMES were discovered. As we have no record of anything being found in Bristol earlier than

the Romano-British period, this find may be considered unique.

The objects discovered were :—

1. A portion of an ANTLER.
2. Two HORNS, or Cores, of Sheep.
3. Several TUSKS.
4. Three small HORN HANDLES.
5. (a) A polished bone BORER or NEEDLE, $7\frac{1}{4}$ ins. long.
(b) Another similar, $5\frac{1}{2}$ ins. long.
6. A small HONE, with round hole at end for suspension to the girdle, worn down from use.

I have submitted these to our great authority, Professor W. Boyd Dawkins, F.R.S., F.S.A., etc., to whom my thanks are due for kindly examining and reporting as follows :—

1. The base of an antler belongs to a young red deer (*Cervus Elaphus*), with marks of chopping, and I think of sawing. These were done with a metal edge, probably of iron or steel.
2. The horn cores of sheep are also cut.
3. The tusks may either belong to domestic hog, or the wild boar.
4. The antler tips, used for handles, are also sawn off by a metal saw, probably of iron.
5. The holes in the two bone needles are drilled with a metal drill.
6. The whetstone, however, has been drilled by the rotation of a spindle used along with sand.

Professor Boyd-Dawkins further says the whole group is very interesting, and may belong, at earliest, to the

PRE-HISTORIC IRON AGE.

These objects were found at the Pithay, on what was undoubtedly the sloping bank of the Peninsula, the ancient site upon which the old City was built, below which flowed the river Frome, and had evidently been deposited there by man of that early period of time.

On the 5th April the site of the 17th century tavern



PREHISTORIC REMAINS FOUND IN THE PITHAY.

known as the "Cat and Wheel,"—historic ground in Castle Green, upon the site of Bristol Castle,—was submitted to public competition and sold. On the 23rd July the destruction of the house was commenced,¹ and within about two weeks the quaint old timbered dwelling was completely demolished. It may be interesting to mention, and possibly suggestive to other Antiquarian Societies, that our member, Mr. Tryon (Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Corporation), has arranged for a clause² to be inserted in the conditions of all future sales of Corporation properties, as in this instance, claiming "all old timber carving" and "all coins and articles of antiquity" on behalf of the city. It was full time that this precaution was adopted, for many interesting local objects of antiquity have been lost to this ancient city, notably the Mediæval Tiles discovered in 1894,³ beneath the "White Lion" Inn, at the corner of Bridewell Street, which were eventually sold to a London collector.

May 7th was the actual date of the commencement of the work at St. Peter's Hospital. I refer to the erection of the large new Board Room on the south-west side, or rear, of that ancient building, for which the ground had to be cleared by pulling down certain of the premises.

It will be remembered that last year the Building Committee of the Board of Guardians proposed to insert ventilating shafts in the beautiful ceiling of the Jacobean Room.⁴ There was naturally a loud protest at this act of vandalism from all local Antiquaries, with the result that the Committee withdrew their recommendation, and forthwith decided to provide the necessary accommodation, which no manner of "ventilating" could have supplied.

¹ See *Western Daily Press*, August 1, 1900.

² This condition was used for the first time in the case of the "Cat and Wheel." There were, however, no "articles of antiquity" found on this occasion, but the well-known carved figure-head and brackets were removed and have been deposited at the City Museum.

³ See *Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club*, vol. iii., p. 95.

⁴ See *Bristol Times and Mirror*, February 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 10th, and 11th, 1900.

The plain erections demolished, of probably early 17th century date, possessed no architectural or antiquarian features, but the work of pulling down was carefully watched, through the kind supervision of Mr. J. J. Simpson. During the work some portions of a 17th century plain moulded chimneypiece, much mutilated, and a fragment of a small moulded capital, or corbel, showing traces of gilding, were noticed, but this portion of the property had evidently been altered several times. A few sundry worn copper coins, ranging from the time of William and Mary, were turned up. Nothing of value, however, was found, though it was rumoured that large quantities of new silver coinage¹ had been discovered.

In the same month (29th May) yet another vestige of old Bristol was attacked, and successfully too, for the small gabled houses, which adjoined the "Seven Stars" public house in St. Thomas' Lane, facing the south side of the Church, were doomed. The "wreckers" began their work, and in a few days the street level was reached. These two dwellings, which were quaint, though not particularly picturesque, were built late in the 17th century. They had frontages of fifteen feet and thirteen feet respectively, and both over-hung the street fully two feet; each contained six rooms, the principal one in the larger house, measuring 12 feet by 10 feet and 8 feet high. The windows of that room were glazed, with leaded oblong panes; there was a heavy moulded chimneypiece fixed therein, and upon the cupboard in a recess were ornamental wrought-iron hinges of two designs.

The most interesting object found in digging foundations for the new building, to be erected for Messrs. Robinsons, Limited, was an ENCAUSTIC TILE, of foliated design—one of a set of four—probably from the Malvern kiln, and made at the end of the 14th or beginning of the 15th century. It undoubtedly came out of the older church,

¹ A mint was established here in August, 1696, and existed until 1698. (See Latimer's *Annals of Bristol*, 17th century, pp. 477—479.)

which was partly taken down towards the end of last century. In addition, a Nuremberg COUNTER in good condition, and several Charles II. FARTHINGS, 1673 and 1675, were discovered.

The important Roman excavations at Caerwent were commenced again in July, and continued until October. The work, which revealed some very interesting features, will be fully described elsewhere in due course.

Many of us have gazed upon the old Dutch house at the corner of High Street so many times, and have heard of its possible destruction almost equally often, that the subject may be considered "played out," yet it seems right to record in our *Transactions* how the matter now stands.

After two unsuccessful attempts on the part of the owner to secure a purchaser by public competition,¹ the Corporation have succeeded in buying² this important property, the ultimate object being to widen the roadway in this congested thoroughfare. If it is possible to save any portion of the quaint 17th century landmark, we may be sure the authorities will do so.

It must be evident to everybody that more space is badly needed at this spot—the cross streets of ancient Bristol—but possibly the necessary improvement at the corner could be attained by removing the shop only, which has been suggested by several architects.

In July a square Bristol farthing, bearing the arms of the city upon a shield within a circle, the ship issuing from a castle to the *right*, was dredged up in the harbour.³ These pieces very rarely turn up, as the bulk of the river and harbour dredging now goes out to the Channel.

A month later two SPOONS also came from the river mud, viz. :—

A 15th century brass spoon, with slender square stem,

¹ *Western Daily Press*, December 8th and 9th, 1898; March 13th and 14th, 1900.

² *Bristol Times and Mirror*, July 31st, 1900.

³ See *Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club*, vol. iv., p. 283.

rude crown-shaped head, and pear-shaped bowl, bearing the stamp of a minute man's head, crowned; length, 6 ins. In fine condition.

A 15th century diamond-pointed pewter spoon, with square stem and pear-shaped bowl; length, 6 ins. And in November another pewter spoon, similar, was dredged from the same source. These brass and pewter spoons are now exceedingly scarce.

In September, when Mr. Monks, contractor to Messrs. Fry and Sons, was cutting an underground trench across the open space opposite the old Baptist Chapel,¹ still standing at the bottom of the Pithay, the base of the ancient PITHAY WELL² was struck into by his workmen.

This relic of by-gone days, which existed at the rear of one of the houses on the eastern side, was covered in by a shed, after it was closed about twelve years ago.

The well was a deep one for so low-lying a district, and must have measured fully 50 feet, for at a depth feet of 47 from the street level a number of pottery vessels were found lying upon a thick deposit of mud. It was evident that the well was filled up before it was closed, but it must have contained at that time many feet of silt, which certainly saved the vessels from being smashed.

The well was built of dry walling, which, however, did not continue quite to the bottom. It was circular at the mouth, and measured five feet in diameter, but decreased in size towards the base, where the masonry was more oval in shape. A wooden bucket and some octagonal and round wooden pipes were also found.

LIST OF VESSELS.

Four coarse red pottery Water Pitchers, in perfect condition, though one was cracked, two of which are illustrated (Nos. 1 and 4).

¹ See *Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club*, vol. iv., p. 53.

² See *Pipes, Pumps, and Conduits of Bristol* (Joseph Leech, 1853).



1.

2.

3.

4.

PLATE VIII.—MEDIÆVAL POTTERY
FOUND IN BRISTOL.

The pitchers vary slightly in size. No. 1 measures $10\frac{1}{2}$ ins. high by $7\frac{1}{2}$ ins. diameter of the body. No. 4 measures 10 ins. high by 8 ins. diameter of the body. A patch of glaze still exists beneath the spout; but it is difficult to say with certainty whether these vessels were originally glazed all over or not.

A yellowish pottery Water Jug (No. 2), $8\frac{1}{4}$ ins. high by $6\frac{3}{4}$ ins. diameter of the body.

A green glazed Water Jug (No. 3), 7 ins. high by $5\frac{1}{2}$ ins. diameter of the body.

Mr. C. H. Read, F.S.A., of the British Museum, considers that these jugs all belong to the 14th or 15th centuries.

This completes the record of local Archæology, as far as my own observations are concerned, up to the end of the 19th century.

I am much indebted to our member, Mr. W. Moline, for his excellent negatives of the dish and early relics, from which the illustrations have been taken.
