

From the *Transactions* of the
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

A Roman Draught-Board

1923, Vol. 45, 285-285

© The Society and the Author(s)

NOTES.

A ROMAN DRAUGHT-BOARD.

The following letter from Mr. St. Clair Baddeley was published in the *Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard*, 24th November, 1923.

While carefully looking over some stones not in the Museum at Chedworth last month, I noticed indications of something interesting upon the back of one which I had purposely turned over. Obtaining a brush and some water from the caretaker, it was sufficiently cleansed so that the visible lines and grooves were relieved of dirt and small snails and then it was turned (for photographic purposes) into the sunshine.

The result has brought to light an example of a Roman draught-board, 10" by 7", *tabella* (or *alveus*), lined out for 64 squares: 8 by 8. The internal lines are seven: the crossing ones, having been more shallow, have mostly disappeared (through use) into mere traces: but they are none the less unmistakable. Probably of old every other square was blacked with charcoal, and the game of *Latrunculi* (Fr., *jeu des dames*) could be played with *lapilli*, small stones, *vitrei*, or discs of glass, or with small coins: otherwise (generically) *tali*: and thus would have ensued the capture of opposing forces: that most ancient game!

This specimen (the best I have seen in Britain) may have been made and long used by men in the stone-mason's shop, perhaps upon the spot, or else at Cirencester. The stone has by courtesy been placed in the Museum, as I recognised further that it forms a member of an octagonal frame of local freestone that internally had 8 sides of 14½ inches: and perhaps it framed a basin or reservoir (diameter 3ft. 9in.), like the larger one still in function in the apsidal *nymphaeum* at N.W. angle of the Villa. This piece completes the frame, whose other well-known members marked with the *Chi-rho* monogram are usually supposed to be (and I have heard usually described as) parts of a stone seat.

ROMANO-BRITISH VILLA AT WHITMINSTER.

In September, 1923, while shooting over fields on the Eastington estate of Capt. Nigel Bengough (of Tocknells, Painswick) Mr.