

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

Romano-British Villa at Whitminster

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1923, Vol. 45, 285-286

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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 unmistakeable. 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.

Edward Armytage had his attention drawn by a ploughman to some dark brown large tesserae. Suspecting them to be of Roman origin he took some of them and forwarded them in a box to me, together with the base of a small Romano-British pot. On receiving my confirmative reply and my request to see the site where the ploughman had met with these, Mr. Armytage kindly took me to visit the ground, at the same time informing me that there was actually some few feet of pavement still in site. This we soon found and I noticed that, as usual, the broken up mortar of the former Villa structure was sufficiently spread over the central field as to actually lighten and diversify its natural colour. Searching here I soon saw evidence even of a repair of the pavement by means of white tesserae inserted here and there in the purple sandstone ground-work. There were also many fragments of thick tiles, two varieties of cooking vessels, and much gravel brought from elsewhere. These heavy sandstone tesserae (also roof-tiles) I have found were used in the Withington Villa and elsewhere: though for outside courts and verandah-floors, rather than for interior *triclinia* and baths.

ROMAN BRICK.

A fine 8" by 8" tile of red brick, 1½" thick: from Woodchester (now in the Museum at Gloucester), bearing capital impression of a nail-studded *caliga* (shoe), or more probably a close fitting *calceus*, having the studs arranged in decorative circles. About $\frac{2}{3}$ of the sole is represented on the tile. The upper-work of such a shoe was also often adorned with patterns in punch work.

St. CLAIR BADDELEY.

COMPOTUS ROLL OF TEWKESBURY ABBEY.

A feature of interest in connexion with the celebration, in October, 1923, of the octocentenary of the consecration of Tewkesbury Abbey was the presentation to the Church, by the Dean and Chapter of Winchester, of the Compotus Roll of the Abbey drawn up by the commissioners of Henry VIII in 1541. The roll consists of 74 skins, all but two of which are written on. It had been lying in the Cathedral Library at Winchester for many years and was not known until 1909, when a mass of papers was cleared from the Chapter Room. The roll gives the account of the first financial year after the dissolution of the Abbey, which took place on 9th of January, 1539. The annual value of the Abbey's possessions at that date was £1595 15s. 6d., with a further sum of £136 8s. 1d. from fees, etc. The pensions assigned