

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

A Reputed Underground Passage at Coberley, Gloucestershire

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1958, Vol. 77, 161-163

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Thirdly, the earliest of all the tiles found, the biblical and rural scene type, with a double circle around the central picture and four corner pieces consisting of foliage. This type shows many different scenes. The religious scenes include the parable of the prodigal son and Moses with the tablet of the Ten Commandments. The tiles with rural scenes (the design used more than any other) appear to be a copy of the Dutch Delftware. These have two main themes to make the central piece: the countryside showing rolling hills in the background with a homestead in the foreground, of which there are many varieties, and houses near the water's edge with sailing ships or swans. They all have the same kind of border, namely, a flower in each corner.

K. MAROCHAN.

K. W. REED.

A REPUTED UNDERGROUND PASSAGE AT COBERLEY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

While work on laying water mains on the road by Booker's Farm, Coberley* in April 1951 was in progress, the roof of a tunnel or underground passage was broken into. The writer had the opportunity of visiting the site with Mrs E. Atherton when the discovery was made.

The tunnel ran from the direction of the present houses, below the road and opened on to the side of the shallow valley known as Town End. It was 3 feet 6 inches wide, about 4 feet high and built of well coursed masonry, with a barrel vaulted stone roof and situated about 2 to 3 feet below modern ground level.

Entrance into it was by the hole accidentally made and stone débris covered the floor. Only a short length could be followed as further penetration was blocked by fallen stone, as was also its exit into the valley.

The site is reputed to be that of Coberley Castle, belonging to a branch of the Berkeley family. The so-called underground

* 6-in. O.S. Glos. xxxiv, N.E.

passage should really be considered as a drain from a medieval house or perhaps, in this case, a castle.

The existence of the tunnel was known, being partly excavated by Capt Bell and Mr Gomonde in 1845 when their chief find appears to have been broken glass. Their report of the work follows :

Note on the underground passage at Cubberly from *British Archaeological Association*, vol. 1, 1846, p. 153, by W. H. Gomonde and Capt. Bell.

'On April 26, 28, 29, 30, having heard of ruins near Cubberly, four miles from Cheltenham, called the Castle, Captain Bell and myself caused an excavation to be made where an arch was said to have existed, this we soon discovered, and found that it was the commencement of a long vaulted passage entirely choked up with rubbish; this we caused to be removed, when we arrived at a rude doorway formed of two upright stones, with another at the bottom grooved to hold a door; in the side stones were square holes as if for two beams to secure the door, which had evidently been of wood, from the quantity of charcoal found at the entrance, an angular-headed nail was also found and a large hinge-bolt of iron much corroded. Just within the door was a square recess about a foot square; in the rubbish was a quantity of painted glass (of which I send some coloured drawings) and fragments of encaustic tiles. Tradition says the passage extends a long way into the country, but we penetrated only to fifteen feet, as the crown of the arch was perfect only to that extent; indeed this latter appears to have been rebuilt at a later time than the passage, as we found the lateral walls extending much farther; we still think of prosecuting our researches farther at some further time. It is singular that there is no account of a castle having stood here. Some of the glass and the tiles would lead one to suppose them of the time of Henry II. Other portions of the glass appear more modern. After we left this excavation, we investigated some interesting ruins called the "Town End", extending from the field called the Castle, and on the banks of a small but limpid stream: the

remains consist of various walls just peeping above the surface of the soil and covered with turf. We found various walls without cement, fragments of black pottery, perhaps Saxon or British; we were told a sort of bakehouse had been found some time back, and a kind of mortar; we opened the ground in various places, but found only pottery of different kinds and quantities, but no fine Roman. A penny of one of the early English kings had been found, but so rubbed as to be illegible'.

HELEN E. O'NEIL.