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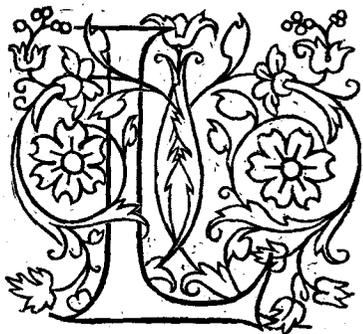
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1874.

The Recent Excavations at Etocetum.

By J. N. BAGNALL.

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DECEMBER 18, 1873.
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LAST year, on the occasion of the visit of the British Archæological Association to Wolverhampton, some excavations were made on a part of the site of Etocetum, in a field to the west of the church called "the Butts," and in which some small portions of Roman masonry can be seen above the surface. The excavations were carried on in the lowest part of the field, and several chambers were discovered.

On removing the rubbish and soil which filled up the space between the walls, a large quantity of roof-tiles, common pottery, bricks, and plaster was found, together with bones of the deer, ox, and swine; some of the plaster was ornamented with lines of red, blue, and yellow paint; and on one of the fragments of brick the letters P. S. were visible. Of the pottery thus discovered some was blue, some red, and some of a whitish-yellow hue. At the bottom of each chamber there was a layer of charcoal, together with many iron nails and fragments of Bangor slates, some of which still showed the holes which had been made in them to admit the nails by which they had been fastened to the rafters and beams. The latter are now represented by the charcoal stratum before named, which shows that the place had been destroyed by fire. Some circular earthenware pipes, similar to modern drain-pipes, and about an inch and a half in diameter, were also discovered. Possibly these foundations were the remains of baths. I should here observe that the materials used for building the walls in question were red sandstone of the neighbourhood, and lime from the limestone quarries of Walsall.

At a subsequent period, during the autumn of this year, the excavations were carried on higher up in the same field, where many other foundations were laid bare.

*Probably
BATHS
Vill*

Here articles of the same description as those before mentioned were discovered ; but in addition, the workmen came upon a small silver ornament, and two of copper ; of these latter the larger appeared to be a buckle, like the one found some years ago at Hadstock in Essex,^(a) and the smaller, which is nearly round, seemed to have been a brooch. These three were found at a depth of about three feet six inches from the surface.

In the lower part of the Butts, near the hedge, and lying to the south-west, there was brought to light, on digging in the bank, a large worked stone, having in the middle a hole, in which probably the hinge of a door or window had worked ; and close to this was a pavement of common stones running for a short distance towards the west, which had the appearance of having once been a road. Near to this spot a large quantity of plaster, with stripes of red, green, and brown colour upon it, were turned up, together with very many oyster and snail shells. It is well known that the Romans used oysters and snails as articles of food.^(b)

In Castle Croft the remains of a strong wall, about eleven feet in thickness, were easily traced for about fifty yards, from west to east. I had the ground excavated on each side of this wall for a considerable distance, and at intervals, in order to see whether any buildings branched off from it, but I could not find any. The ground thus turned over produced, however, many fragments of beautiful Samian ware, none of which, with the exception of a few very small pieces, had been previously met with. These pieces had on them many curious patterns, and three bear the maker's name.^(c) Here, too, a few brass coins were discovered, but most of them are very much injured. There were traces of the action of fire by the side of this wall, many pieces of charcoal and cinder being met with. A whetstone was found here, in addition to several pieces of broken glass bottles. On the south side of Castle Croft, immediately adjoining the road which runs through Wall from east to west, some holes were dug in order to prove whether any Roman remains existed there or not, as no masonry could be discovered. When at a depth of about four feet from the surface many animal bones were found, in some places covered by a layer of charcoal. I also discovered here, in addition to fragments of iron cinder, many pieces of that metal, but, generally speaking, so much corroded that it is almost impossible to say what their use had been ; still one, I think, is part of the blade of a sword or spear ; another I imagined to be part of a bridle-bit, and, on taking it out of the ground and shaking off the soil which adhered to it, four large teeth fell from it. Two other large pieces I suppose to have been used as door handles ; they are about sixteen inches in length. There was very little pottery found here, but several pieces of lead and copper ; of the

(a) See *Archaeological Journal*, vol. viii. p. 34.

(b) There is a tradition that from this field, the Butts, there is a subterranean passage or tunnel leading to Castle Croft, which lies a little distance to the east, near to the residence of Mr. Line. In 1796, when Shaw visited Wall, he states that he saw in the hedge below where the church now stands, the crown of such a subterranean arch, and since that date the tunnel is said to have been seen when the road by Mr. Line's house was lowered ; but although the spot was pointed out where it was reported to have been opened, I have not yet been able to find it, although search was made for it with great diligence during several days.

(c) SECV for Secundi, and ALBINI.

former some were reduced to a white paste, but many whole pieces were obtained; two seem to be weights: they are about $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. in diameter, one is $\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick, and the others very thin; another was nearly round. Other pieces of lead, curved at one end, and presenting the appearance of "hold-fasts," were dug up here. There were many pieces of copper articles here, too,—one of which is, I think, a key; two are parts of fibulæ; others are undoubtedly small nails and rivets; and there were also small pieces of sheet copper. Here, again, ashes were found with the fragments of metal, and burnt clay also showed the action of fire. A few brass coins were found here, and some broken pieces of glass. In a field on the south side of the road before mentioned as running from east to west through Wall, I found a large quantity of animal bones, and also clay and charcoal, as in Castle Croft, but no metals. On the south side of this field are the remains of a paved road, like the one mentioned as existing in the Butts, which has been traced into an adjoining field about one hundred yards distant to the west; and on the southern side of the road are the remains of a wall, which has long ago been thrown down, and which was probably the outer wall of Etocetum on the south side. Another road similarly paved was found in digging out the foundations for Wall Church.

There is in the Museum at Lichfield an urn containing burnt bones, which was discovered in Castle Croft about fourteen years ago; and I am told that in the road running from north to south by Castle Croft, and near "The Trooper" inn, a stone coffin was discovered containing some human bones. This discovery was made when the road was lowered, about thirty years ago.

A large quantity of fragments of Roman pottery can be found at any time in the fields in the immediate vicinity of Wall, but especially in those which lie to the south. I have not, however, as yet met with any foundations there. Dr. Plot (p. 401) mentions that a Roman pillar and some other antiquities were found at Chesterfield, which lies about a quarter of a mile to the south of Wall; and Camden says (vol. ii. p. 495) that "the place is called Wall from the pieces of wall remaining there, and including about two acres, called Castle Croft, to which the ancient city is said to have adjoined on the other side of the road (*i.e.* the south side), destroyed before the Conquest, according to the old tradition of the inhabitants. They show a place where, by the great foundations, they suppose stood a temple." This is said to be where the church now stands—at the east end of the Butts. The reason that the church was erected on this particular spot is as follows: It was intended originally to build the church in a field near the junction of four roads, close to Mr. Moss' house, to the south-east of Castle Croft, and the building had actually risen to the height of three or four feet from the ground, when it was discovered that the land could not be conveyed by the gentleman who had wished to give it for the site of the church, and consequently the walls had to be pulled down, and the materials removed to another site. Singular to relate, the only place to be obtained was that which is said to be the site of the ancient Temple of Minerva. The following extract from Mr. Lomax's *Guide to the City of Lichfield, etc.* (p. 58), is of interest, as it has reference to the

foregoing notice of the Temple which formerly stood at Wall :—"Some time since, a man much employed in draining lands in the neighbourhood of Wall was asked if he ever found coins or other curiosities there. He replied that he had often met with pieces of money looking very old, but had given them to his children to play with; 'but once,' said he, 'I found a figure of earthenware, as big as a man, but it was not a man' (here he described with his hands the shape of a female bust); 'but it was not a woman, for it had a queer dress, and a man's cap like a soldier's helmet; and we broke it in pieces to mend the bank of the drain.' Wall, on the Watling Street, was the city of Etocetum, where was a temple dedicated to Minerva, whose image no doubt was broken to mend the drain. Coins of Tiberius and other emperors have often been picked up, in gold, silver, and copper. Not far from the same spot, a farmer of the name of Derry found three earthen pots, some feet deep in the earth. 'I thought,' said he, 'they were full of money, but they contained nought but bones, so for fear anybody hereafter might disturb the ashes of the dead, I took my spade and chawped them all to pieces.' It is stated that the Roman soldiers who seized S. Amphibalus and his companions (after they had fled from Verulam upon the martyrdom of S. Alban, in 286) at Christianfield, near Lichfield, were despatched for that purpose from Etocetum." Shaw gives a very interesting account of the discovery of a wooden barricade which formerly stood at the west of Wall, and extended to the north, parallel to the brook which flows from north to south at the bottom of the hill on which the church stands. This barricade, Shaw tells us, has been traced for upwards of 500 yards, and was made of whole trunks of oak-trees placed in the ground close to each other. They were twelve feet in length, of which four feet were sunk in the ground; and at the distance of five feet above the surface an opening was made three feet in length, through which a "look-out" could be kept, and missiles discharged. The valley on the east side was formerly a morass, but it has been well drained, and is now good meadow land. The traces of a road which formerly led across this morass, running from west to east, are plainly to be seen. Large quantities of the before-named timber have been dug up from time to time. Shaw states that he saw some entire pieces which had been found in digging a drain, at about two feet deep, and with them a wooden mallet—which latter was, however, unfortunately burnt. All these pieces were twelve feet long and from ten to twelve inches in diameter, and some retained the marks of the axe and saw. A fosse or dyke was also discovered, twelve feet wide at the top, five feet deep, and three feet wide at the bottom. Shaw says this fortification was one of uncommon magnitude, and was erected in the reign of Hadrian, about the year 120. In digging in the neighbourhood of the locality pointed out I have found a large quantity of oak timber, but no whole pieces; still I have no doubt they are part of the ancient Roman barricade. Some bear the marks of the saw, but most are so much decayed as scarcely to bear the touch of the hand. I have two very curious pieces of wood, however, which were found last week in the place above named, bearing some very rude carving on them, but the fragments are so small that I do not know what they

have been. The carving is more like that of some rude people than of a nation so highly civilized as the Romans.

My friend Mr. Molyneux, of Burton-upon-Trent, has kindly given me a description of the coins which I discovered, as follows:—"The coins that have been exhumed are all of brass, and vary in size from half an inch to an inch and a half in diameter; but except upon four or five of them, no portion of the original inscription or device can be deciphered. One of them, however, bears the name of Constantius (father of Constantinus the Great) and on its reverse the words "GENIO POPVLI ROMA — —." Constantius, who died at York A.D. 306, obtained the title of Cæsar by his victories in Britain, and in all probability he for a time occupied Etoctum. A small coin contains a head encircled by a spiked crown, and on the reverse is a symbolical figure of Justice; and another has on the reverse a draped female figure, between the letters S. C."

In conclusion, I have to thank all those gentlemen to whom I applied for permission to dig on their land for the readiness with which in every instance my request was granted.

NOTE.—Since the above was written, two pieces of lead piping have been discovered. One is six feet eight inches long, has a two-inch bore, and weighs $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb.; the other is two feet eight inches long, and has a two and a quarter inch bore. These leaden pipes were found at the lower end of the Butts, and appear to have been connected with baths. Pieces of cinder, like blast-furnace slag, were found in the same field; from which circumstance it seems probable that iron was made at Wall. Several floor quarries, ten inches square, with the letters P S on them, were met with near the spot where the leaden pipes were found.

