

INVESTIGATIONS OF ROMAN REMAINS IN THE COUNTY
OF ESSEX, BY THE HON. RICHARD C. NEVILLE, F.S.A.

IN THE MONTHS OF SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 1852.

THE following notices of recent excavations at two sites of Roman occupation, hitherto unexplored, relate to a locality, on the borders of the counties of Essex and Cambridgeshire, of singular interest to the archaeologist, on account of its proximity to the remarkable tumuli examined so successfully by the late Mr. Gage Rokewode.

The remains first to be described are those of a small villa, of which the examination, carried out under my superintendence, was completed early in September last. The building in question is situated in the parish of Ashdon, Essex, on Great Copt Hill, a part of Great Bowsers' Farm, the property of Lord Maynard. It is little more than a mile distant from the Bartlow Hills, also on Lord Maynard's estates ; and the site commands a complete view of those striking sepulchral tumuli. From Sunken Church Field, Hadstock, the distance is about four miles.

Such a locality was well calculated to inspire me with sanguine hopes of success : the villa at Hadstock is not more than three miles distant from the spot, so that it is altogether a Roman vicinity. I experienced no slight disappointment on finding, as the excavations advanced, that the walls of the villa, in addition to injuries sustained from the modern agriculturist, had been so rudely dealt with by the last inhabitants of the site, that sufficient vestiges only remained to indicate, with tolerable accuracy, the ground-plan, as shown in the accompanying representation. It is possible that the site may have been occupied even in Saxon times, and that the complete destruction, which the building had finally sustained, may have then taken place ; since a coin of Alfred the Great was discovered in the field some years since.¹

Although much must necessarily be left to conjecture, I think that a pretty accurate notion may be formed of the

¹ This coin is now in the possession of the late tenant of the farm, Mr. Soward, who states that he removed a large quantity of

building materials from the spot, and especially the remains of the piers, &c., in the central part of the hypocaust, No. 4.

general arrangements and capacities of the house. There are no appearances about the foundation-walls which would lead to the conclusion that it had been luxuriously fitted up : there were, however, numerous fragments of painted stucco, presenting remains of varied decorative patterns. No tesserae were found which would show the existence of mosaic pavements. Yet, from the lower tiles, the only remains of piers, still here and there discernible (No. 4, plan), so low had the edifice been razed, and existing *in situ*, where such piers were requisite for supporting the floor, it is beyond doubt that a *suspensura* existed. The hypocaust (No. 4) appears, indeed, to have been of considerable dimensions ; and the flues and furnace for diffusing heat (No. 5 in the plan) are the only tolerably perfect portion of the remains.

The interior arrangements may be thus briefly described :—The building, which is long and narrow, measuring about 52 ft. by 17 ft., seems to have been nearly equally divided within ; the larger half having been warmed by heated air, and the smaller (consisting of the two compartments, 6 and 7 in the plan,) unprovided with any hypocaust, having rudely-formed pavements of fragments of pottery and broken brick rolled into the natural clay, which apparently would have been on a level with the floor laid on the tops of the piers in the adjoining compartment, when those supports were in their complete state. This coarse flooring of broken brick still remains ; it may indeed have been possibly the work of the latest occupants ; for it is hardly to be supposed that such rude internal arrangements can have originally appertained to a structure, the larger portion of which must have been so superior in constructive appliances and accommodation. It had unfortunately happened that a land-ditch has passed through what I imagine to have been the channel of communication, diagonally, between the smaller and the main hypocaust, shown in the plan (Nos. 2 and 4). The question may therefore arise, whether the breach in the foundations is entirely owing to that recent injury ; or, whether the labourers, having met with obstacles in the foundation-walls, in cutting their drain, may not have shaped its course to the part where there was least impediment, which would naturally be where the passage for the flue existed.

It frequently occurs, in the examination of sites of Roman villas, that many foundation walls are presented to view,

running parallel to each other at short intervals, or otherwise difficult to explain, consistently with any reasonable supposition as regards the original arrangement and dimensions of the chambers above. Some of these foundation-walls may, as has been suggested by Mr. Buckler, whose practical knowledge and discernment has frequently aided me in researches of this nature, have been intended only for strengthening and binding together the principal walls of the fabric, and they may have never been carried up above the ground-line, or flooring.

The building stands north and south. Only one coin was exhumed, a third brass, quite illegible, discovered amongst the ashes, in the supposed furnace (No. 5. in the plan). Numerous scored tiles were found, with fragments of pottery and glass; also an iron implement resembling a knife; and a broken *ligula* of bronze, an instrument sometimes regarded as having been used in mixing colours, or as a surgeon's probe, was brought to light in digging a trench four yards to the east of the building. One, found at Caerleon, not dissimilar in form, is figured in the *Journal*, Vol. VIII. p. 160.

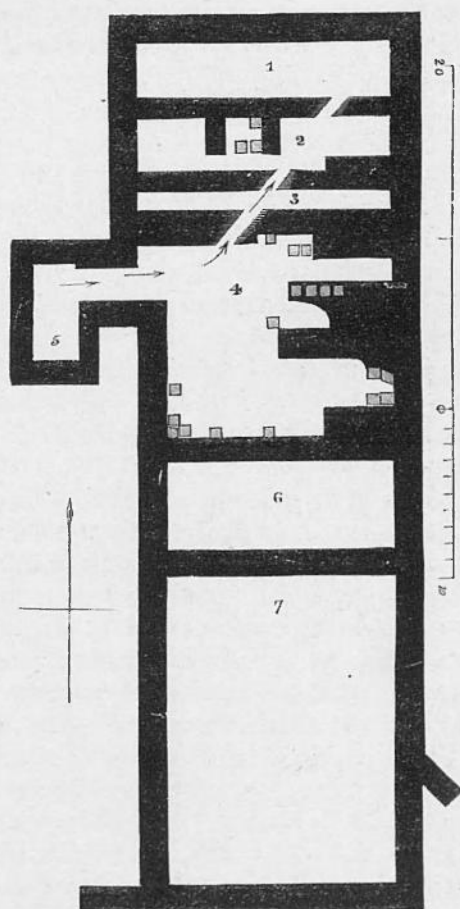
Near the south-west angle of the villa appeared a portion of masonry, projecting diagonally from the face of the western front, as shown in the plan. I could not, by trenching, find any indication that this offset had ever been continued further than it is here represented. The only mode of explaining the intention of this wall, appeared to be this,—that the western wall of the house, on the outside, was skirted all round with a sort of pavement of pebble-stones, evenly laid, corresponding in width to this stump of wall, which seems to form the boundary of the paved walk, towards its southern extremity.

I have ascertained, by cutting trenches, that no other remains of buildings exist in the neighbourhood.

The following notes may be acceptable, in further explanation of the accompanying plan :—

Nos. 1, 2, 3, Narrow compartments, over which appears to have been a chamber or chambers artificially heated; the remains of piers are seen near the partition walls; there is also a diagonal passage, connecting these compartments, as appears most probable, with the larger hypocaust, No. 4. Unfortunately, the land-drainer has shaped the course of a channel through the aperture, so that, as before stated, the question arises whether the breach was part of the original intention of the designers of the building.

ROMAN ANTIQUITIES IN ESSEX.



Plan of the Roman Villa, on Great Copt Hill, the property of Lord Maynard.
Excavated by the Hon. Richard C. Neville, September, 1852

As, however, the sides of the cutting through the walls are smooth and finished, and there appears no other passage of communication for the heated air from the furnace No. 5, and the larger hypocaust No. 4, to the smaller compartments, I am of opinion that the only reasonable explanation of the plan is by supposing this passage to be part of the original arrangements.

No. 4, The large hypocaust ; a considerable number of tiles remained, at the corners, and especially at the western side, indicating the position of the piers : in the centre they had been removed by the late Tenant.

No. 5, This appears to have been the furnace, which, when opened, was full of burnt ashes and soot, and it was connected by the main flue with the largest and central hypocaust, No. 4.

Nos. 6, 7, Two compartments, composing the division of the dwelling, not artificially heated ; they were paved with fragments of pottery, &c., rolled into the clay, the level of the floors being 30 in. above the bottom tiles of the piers, in the adjacent hypocaust.

ACCOUNT OF AN EXCAVATION AT BARTLOW, ESSEX.

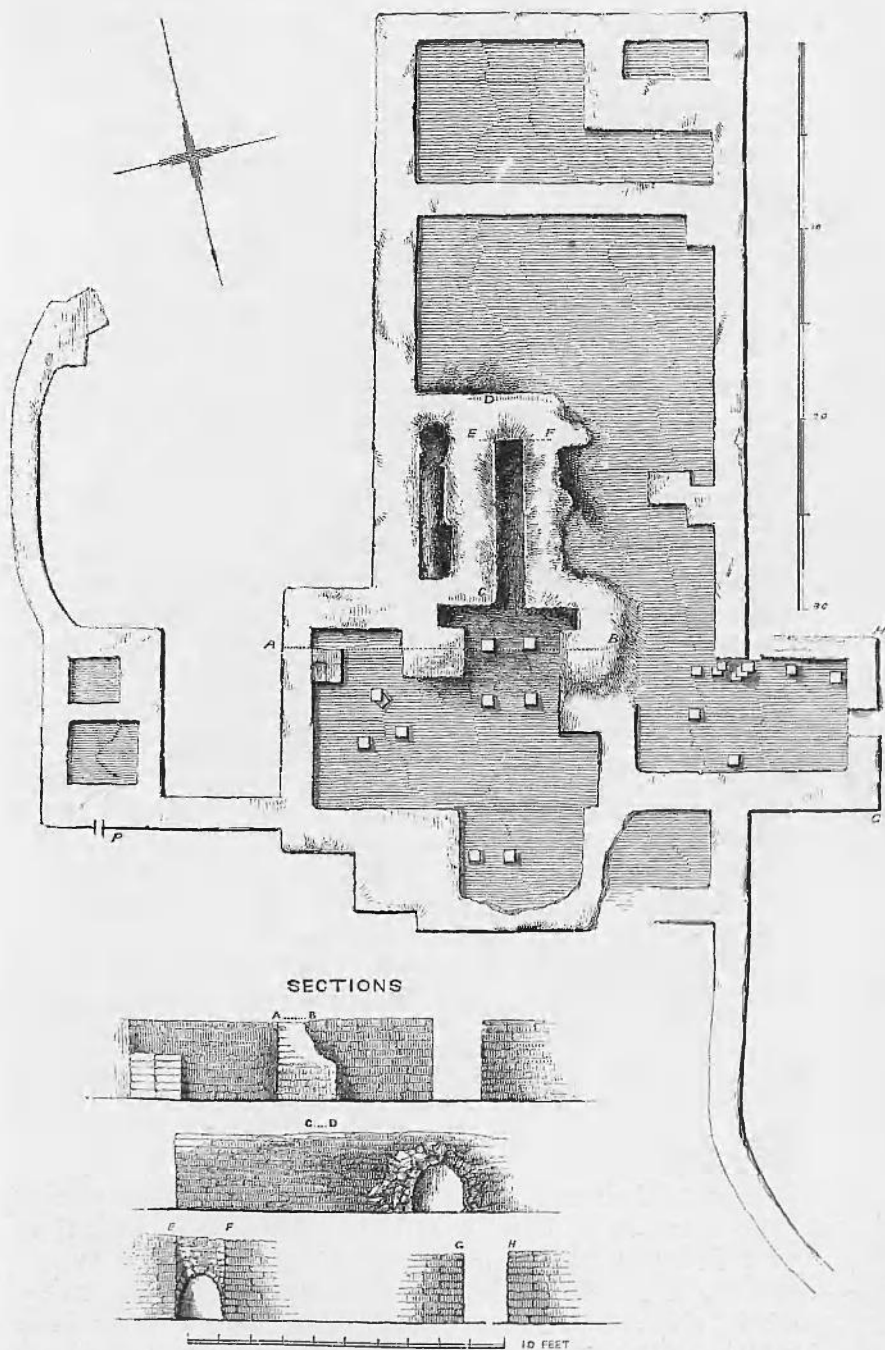
Deeming the neighbourhood a likely one, I commenced digging in this parish, on the 13th of last October, in a field, the property of the Rev. Mr. Dayrell, within 100 yards of the north-eastern base of the celebrated tumuli. My labourers immediately came upon, and commenced excavating, a circular black hole ; this, although at first I was surprised by the discovery of an infant skeleton about a foot from the surface, I supposed, from the numerous fragments of Roman pottery and bones of bullocks within it, to be one of the deep pits so frequently occurring in my excavations at Chesterford, and in those at Ewell, in Surrey, examined by Dr. Diamond. In our downward progress, however, it soon became evident, from the change in the nature of its contents, to large Roman flanged roofing tiles, and scored tiles encrusted with mortar, as well as great flint stones with large patches of painted fresco upon them, that we were opening an old well, which had been filled up with the ruins of an adjacent building. This eventually proved to be the case, and at the depth of thirty-one feet, we at length reached the water. The stones and tiles continued all this time as thickly as before ; in fact there was but little earth intermixed with them.

Our search for the building thus indicated proved very short, for within 3 ft. of the brink of the well, on the southern side, we came to the outside northern walls of the house ; an accurate plan of which, by Mr. Cracknell of

Saffron Walden, accompanies this account. This building, not being very extensive, occupied four men little more than ten days in clearing; when laid open it measured from north to south 48 ft. across, and from east to west 43 ft. 9 in. in length. It exhibits most of the features common to Roman structures of a similar character; the walls are composed principally of flint, and are irregular, varying from 1 ft. 6 in. to 2 ft. 6 in. in thickness. In many parts, however, they are evenly built, the furnaces entire, and the angles of the hypocausts strongly constructed and turned with tiles. The short cross-wall of the western end is also entirely composed of this material. The two principal apartments have been warmed with hot air, and provided with pavements, which is evidenced by the remains of the piers for supporting them, still *in situ*; of these there are twelve visible in the larger, and eight in the smaller, hypocaust; they appear to be less regular and at greater intervals, than in former villas excavated under my directions, and are unaccompanied by any tesserae or cubes of mosaic flooring. Many remnants of painted fresco prove, however, that the walls were ornamented; and in the two small compartments at the north-eastern end, which are floored with red mortar, the mouldings round the base are still very perfect. These two compartments, as well as the arrangements of the one furnace for heating a double hypocaust, are the only features in this edifice which call for any remark; as the remainder, though on the whole perfect, is in many places made up with chalk, and in others materially injured by time, or the original destroyers of the building.

I shall first notice the former of these compartments. From the discovery of a lead pipe, fixed in its original position in a groove in the floor of the outermost and larger of these, with its end even with, and slightly projecting over, the outside walls, it seemed that they were designed for baths, or cisterns, or for some purposes of washing. The only objection to the first appropriation is their size, the larger being only 3 ft., while the smaller is only 2 ft. 6 in. square; the space would therefore hardly admit a man, unless in a squatting posture, or standing upright. The pipe is 6 in. in length, and 2 in. in diameter; it is marked P, and its position shown, in the plan. The inside end is broken, showing it to have been part of a much larger tube. The existing portion, however.

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Plan of the Roman Villa, in Church Field, Bartlow. Excavated by the
Hon, Richard C. Neville, October 1852.

seems formed to fit the groove prepared for its reception. No traces of anything of the same sort occur in the rest of the building.

The furnace, which is well and strongly built, and entirely composed of tiles, consists of three passages, or compartments, 8 or 9 ft. in length, 1 ft. 6 in. in width, and 2 ft. 6 in. in depth ; the central one of these only has an aperture at the back for supplying the fuel, in the shape of an arch, as shown in section E F ; the other two on each side are closed behind, but unite with the main passage, the one by an arch in the partition wall, section C D, the other by a similar aperture in the same, through which, from the slanting direction of its course, as visible from the remains of its outside wall, here broken, the hot air seems to have been conveyed to the smaller hypocaust, at the western end of the building. The opening in the brickwork here, section G H, can only be accounted for by supposing it to have been designed to promote the draught, or current through the above-mentioned channel. The evident pains bestowed upon it, as well as the regularity and strength of its construction, are sufficient evidence of its being designed for some essential purpose, and unless we suppose the house to have been at some period continued further in this direction (westward), which is disproved beyond doubt by the nature of the surrounding undisturbed chalk, it is difficult to assign to it any other use. This wall itself is 2 ft. thick, 3 ft. 9 in. in height, and contains 12 courses of tiles ; including the opening, it is 9 ft. 9 in. across from one side of the apartment to the other, and in fact closes this end of the house, which is very narrow. The remarkable feature here is, that there is no masonry on the two sides which it connects, as they are simply hewn out from the solid chalk ; thus presenting a specimen of most primitive architecture, rendered more striking by the proximity of well finished work. As, however, they have been smoothly faced, judging from the stucco on the plain flints, found in the well adjoining, they may probably have been fitted in a similar manner.

It will be seen by the plan, that the building extends beyond the furnace to the south and south-west, where it abruptly terminates in an imperfect wall ; but in this part as well as the single wall on the north-west, the work is so irregular in shape, and so rude, as to lead to the conclusion

that these portions of the edifice were the additions of later and more barbarous occupants, and not the work of the original and civilised founders, whose connexion with the edifice I am inclined to limit to the central rooms to the north of the furnace; these may thus perhaps have been on the outside of the house, for a sort of trench, into which the arch E F opens, has been cut here in the solid chalk to receive the fuel to be consumed, and this would hardly have been done in the interior of the dwelling. This trench was filled with black ashes, and near it was discovered a small bronze *ligula*. Besides this, very few relics were obtained in this excavation; the usual amount of broken pottery, one bottom of a vessel of Samian ware, with part of the potter's mark—G I N I fragments of iron and glass, some small coins of the Constantine family, a silver denarius of Julia Augusta, a first brass of Hadrian, a second brass of Domitian, and a small coin of Decentius with Christian reverse (X. and P. combined), comprehend the entire list of remains discovered. Since the completion of this excavation, I have been trenching in the immediate vicinity with considerable success, for, in the course of three weeks, I have found 350 coins; these are almost entirely of the lowest Empire, many being exceedingly small, and probably imitations of the Roman money by the contemporaneous tribes, while a very large proportion are entirely defaced; among those distinguishable, nearly eight out of ten are of the Constantine family, many of Valentinian, and among the rest one second brass of Domitian, one of Faustina sen., one first brass of Trajan, one of Hadrian; small brass coins of Salonina, Julia Helena, Theodora Flavia, Magnentius, Claudius Gothicus, Tetricus, Theodosius, Honorius, Arcadius, and many City coins with the wolf and twins, which I believe belong to the Constantines. Numerous bronze and bone pins and needles, iron styli, fragments of pottery, and one piece of bronze, a foliated ornament terminating with an acorn, which, together with a silver and a bronze ring,² the former with an imitative intaglio of blue

- This remarkable ring may possibly have formed part of an armlet, broken off and fashioned to the size of the finger. The width is $\frac{3}{8}$ in. One end represents the head of a serpent, dilated and strongly marked: the scales are distinctly shown, and the metal is firmly patinated. The other end shows a fracture. Another broken serpent armlet was found at Ickle-

ton; *Journal*, vol. vi., p. 17. The serpent's head appears on the gold rings from the Brumell collection, *Ibid.* vol. viii., p. 37; and this favourite type of ornament is well illustrated by a pair of silver armlets found at Castlethorpe, Bucks, about 1830, figured in the *Journal of the Brit. Archæol. Association*.

ROMAN ANTIQUITIES IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX.



Diminutive earthen Vases, found with the remains of young Children at Chesterford, Essex.

In the Hon. Richard C. Neville's Museum, at Audley End. (Height of the largest vessel, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches; of the smallest, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.)

paste, the impress apparently being heads conjoined, have been obtained in this work, and have been exhibited at the Meetings of the Institute.

I cannot quit this subject without calling attention to the finding of the infant skeleton in the mouth of the well, almost under the eaves of the house, or *suggrundaria*, as coincident with those discovered in the Roman buildings at Ickleton, and Chesterford,³ at the latter place in two instances; and that these were buried there by the Romans, and not casually, or by their successors, I hold to be proved, by my having in one of them found fifteen bodies of small children interred at intervals alongside a wall in the Borough-field, at Chesterford—with a corresponding number of tiny Roman Vases, which are now in my collection, and practically exemplify the old adage—“*Parvum Parva decent*.”

The accompanying representation of these curious little relics, will be viewed with interest by those who take pleasure in investigating the antiquities and usages of the Roman age in Britain.⁴

ACCOUNT OF AN ANCIENT KILN, EXCAVATED IN THE PARISH
OF ASHDON, MARCH 22, 1852.

This building is situated in a large field, called Oak Field, the property of Lord Braybrooke, two miles and a half east of Saffron Walden, and just within the boundary of the parish of Ashdon, which runs through the next enclosure. My attention was first drawn to the spot last spring, by numerous fragments of Roman tiles and pottery scattered about the surface; this induced me to examine the ground by cutting a trench in search of foundations; my labourers almost immediately came upon the remains of the construction, a faithful representation of which, by the accurate pencil of Mr. Youngman, of Saffron Walden, has been laid before the Institute.

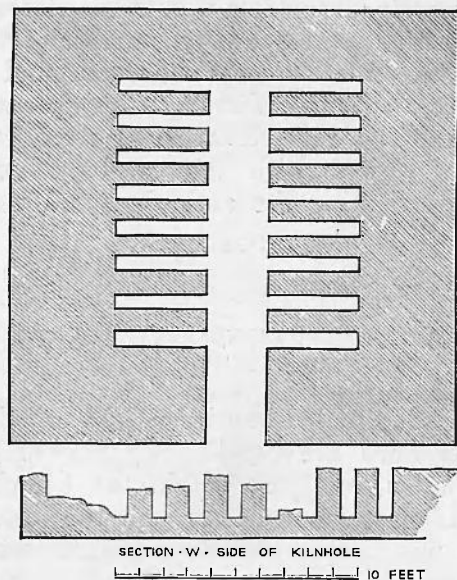
The building, which appeared to have been a kiln, used by the Romans for the burning of pottery, or more probably of bricks, stood north-east and south-west, and was of a square form, being, as nearly as could be measured, some

³ Archaeol. Journal, vol. vi. p. 21.

⁴ The height of the largest of these

vessels is only $3\frac{1}{4}$ in., the smallest is three quarters of an inch in height.

allowance being made, in consequence of its rude construction, and the irregularities of proportion in the component parts, 18 feet by 18, inclusive of the outer walls. The furnace, from the quantity of charcoal, and black ashes found therein, appeared to have been at the south-west end, immediately communicating with the central and largest flue. This measured 2 ft. 6 in. across at the entrance, 2 ft. along the whole length, dividing the structure into two nearly equal portions, with eight lateral flues, 7 inches wide, diverging opposite to each other on either side: it was



Plan of the Kiln, and Section of the Side.

closed by the north-eastern end-wall, very carefully constructed of Roman tiles. These, as well as the flanged tiles, laid one within another in the piers dividing the flues, had evidently been used in some former building; and though much care had been bestowed upon the lateral passages, their ends were closed only with fragments of brick, worked up with stiff clay, which, however, hermetically seals them, and formed the rude outer walls. These lateral flues were respectively 3 feet long, and sloped upwards towards their extreme ends; their depth, from the top of the partition piers, where they join the main passage, being

1 ft. 8 in., and at their backs 1 foot. The depth of the main flue, from the tops of the piers, was 2 ft. 8 in., so that it was a foot lower than the smaller flues at their junction with it. Its bottom was peddled with clay and bricks worked up as the walls. The width of the partition walls, or piers of the side flues, was 11 in.; and the thickness of the outer rude walls of the entire fabric rather more than 3 feet, on the southern and western sides, but on the northern and eastern sides they are of much less solidity.

The following statement will show the dimensions of the inner, or kiln, part of the building :—

	ft.	in.
Total length, from pier end to pier end, inclusive	14	11
Length of central flue, which projects at the furnace	15	0
Length of side flues.	3	0
Width of central flue, at the mouth	2	6
Width of do. at the end	2	0
Width of side flues	0	7
Width of piers dividing the side flues	0	11
Depth of central flue, from the pier tops	2	8
Depth of side flues, from do.	1	8
Do. at their backs	1	0
Depth of central flue, below the side.	1	0
Total length of the construction, including 3 ft. outer walls	18	0
Total width, rough measurement	18	0

Although this was one of the rudest buildings I have examined, it must have been well adapted for the purposes intended; closed in as the kiln was on every side by clay, tightly rammed down, the heat from the furnace must have been very great. This was also shown by the tiles, composing the piers and partition walls of the side flues, being completely blackened and cracked by the intensity of the fire, as ascertained on removing the building from the soil, for the benefit of the tenant, after the examination, and the annexed plan and drawing had been completed.

The number of relics discovered in this examination by no means answered to the expectations raised by the quantity of fragments originally found scattered upon the surface; for, on breaking ground, scarcely as many were obtained, and nothing approaching a perfect vase was met with. The appearance of the fragments denoted them to be parts of well baked and long finished vessels, probably

broken in use by the occupiers of the spot. The clay, used in plastering up the kiln, was taken from the soil of the locality; and, judging from the appearance of the ground, a great quantity had at some time been dug out, probably for the manufacture there carried on.

If this manufacture was of pottery, it is at least singular that no unfinished productions of that nature should have been exhumed; the only relic obtained, which might appear to have served in fictile manufacture, was the tine of a deer's horn. This had been shaped into an implement, slightly curved, $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, forked at both ends, and it seemed not ill suited to produce the marks upon the scored tiles, so numerous in all Roman buildings, occurring also in abundance in the Villas lately opened in the adjoining parishes of Ashdon and Bartlow, as well as that in Sunken Church Field, Hadstock, in 1850, only five miles distant from this spot. This tine, together with three or four third brass coins of the Constantine family, an iron knife, and other fragments of iron, were all the relics obtained in the excavation now described.

The ground was carefully trenched all round in search of further foundations, but without success.

R. C. NEVILLE.