

THE RECENT DISCOVERIES AT WROXETER.¹

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ON a former occasion I brought before the Institute some particulars regarding the city of Urioconium, and I then endeavoured to bring together the scattered notices of such discoveries as had been made from time to time, previously to the commencement of the excavations during the present year.² At the meeting of the Society at Shrewsbury I had the gratification of accompanying the members in their visit to Wroxeter, where I was enabled by knowledge of the localities to point out the extent of the walls, the sites where certain discoveries, noticed in my former memoir, had been made, and such other particulars as were then known. Recent investigations have amply fulfilled the expectation of the interesting results by which a well organised effort to examine the extensive area of the city would be repaid, and I feel assured that a report of what has been already brought to light during the excavations now in progress will not prove unacceptable, as a sequel to my former memoir.

In resuming, however, my notices of the vestiges of this great Roman city, so long neglected, a word of commendation is due to the meritorious exertions of those who have been foremost in promoting this highly interesting undertaking, and by whose liberality or zealous assistance the work of excavation has been carried forward. The names of Mr. Botfield, through whose generous proposition the project was originated, Mr. Wright, who first put the matter into a practical form, and Dr. Johnson, who has carefully and zealously superintended the exploration of Urioconium, must be held in special and honourable remembrance.

A detailed account of the late excavations has been given in the *Archæologia Cambrensis*, and also in the *Gentleman's Magazine*; they have been more fully recorded in Mr.

¹ Communicated to the Section of Antiquities at the Meeting of the Insti-

tute at Carlisle, July 29, 1859.

² See page 52, in this volume.

Wright's Guide, recently published at Shrewsbury.³ Many members of the Institute may doubtless be familiar with the chief particulars of the discoveries; my object, however, on the present occasion is to sum up the results of investigations so successfully commenced, my endeavour in my former memoir having been to bring together all that had been previously known.

Before commencing the description of the excavations, it may be desirable to call attention to the extent of Uriconium, as compared with other provincial cities of the Roman Empire. The area, for example, was considerably greater than that of Pompeii; the walls of Uriconium being three miles in circuit, whilst those of Pompeii are less than two miles; the former enclosing a surface of 223 acres, whereas the superficial extent of Pompeii was only 160 acres. The circuit of the walls of Silchester is only one mile and a half; the area is 102 acres. (See Arch. Journal, vol. viii. p. 330.) The area of Kenchester, according to Mr. Wright, is only between twenty and thirty acres.

The excavations commenced on the 3rd February last, by the examination of the foundations of the remains known as the "Old Wall," of which mention was made in my former memoir.⁴ (A. A. in the plan.) The foundation was discovered at fourteen feet below the surface. A trench was dug to the northward of the Old Wall, and three walls running parallel to it were successively met with. The Old Wall was next traced toward the west, and was found to continue nearly to the hedge of the field in which it stands, and which separates the field from the Watling Street Road. Here it joined another wall, which diverged nearly at a right angle. A wall parallel to this was found at the opposite or eastern extremity of the Old Wall, running not quite at a right angle to that work. The three walls running parallel to the Old Wall were traced the whole length of the building. Thus the plan of the building was found to be a parallel-

³ *Archæologia Cambrensis*, vol. v. 3rd series, p. 207, where the report by Mr. Wright and Dr. H. Johnson is given, with a ground-plan of the foundations of buildings discovered; see also *Gent. Mag.* 1859, p. 447, and the "Guide to the Ruins of the Roman City of Uriconium," by Thomas Wright, M.A., Shrewsbury, J. O. Sandford, 1859, 12mo. The volume last noticed contains numerous illustra-

tions. A second and enlarged edition has recently appeared.

⁴ See pp. 57, 60, in this volume. An interesting view of the "Old Wall," as it appeared in 1721, was sent to the Society of Antiquaries by the Rev. Mr. Carte, and is preserved in their collection of drawings. The best recent representation of the Wall is the etching given in Mr. Hartshorne's *Salopia Antiqua*, p. 132.

ogram (B), composed of a central area and two side aisles, resembling the foundation of a church of the Basilica type. The central area (*medius-porticus*) measured 226 ft. long, by 30 ft. wide; of the two lateral passages, that to the south was uniformly about 14 ft. wide, and that to the north 13 ft. 9 in., at the western, and 16 ft. at the eastern extremity. Thus the proportions of the whole area were 226 ft. by 60 ft. To the east there is an adjoining enclosure (c) 26 ft. by 60 ft., which may have been the *chalcidicum*, a room usually attached to Basilicas. The length of the building, including this, would therefore be 262 by 60 ft. The central area is just the width of the side aisles taken together. The walls of these which remain probably supported columns, and were, in fact, only the base upon which they rested. I have heard that rows of columns were found in this field, and that these were dug up to form the coping stones of the enclosure walls; a labourer mentioned to me some years since the fact of their lying in rows.⁵ The central portion of the building had been neatly paved, in its whole extent, with small red bricks, 3 in. long by 1 in. wide, set edgeways in herring-bone fashion. Here and there a few pieces of broken roofing tiles were found.

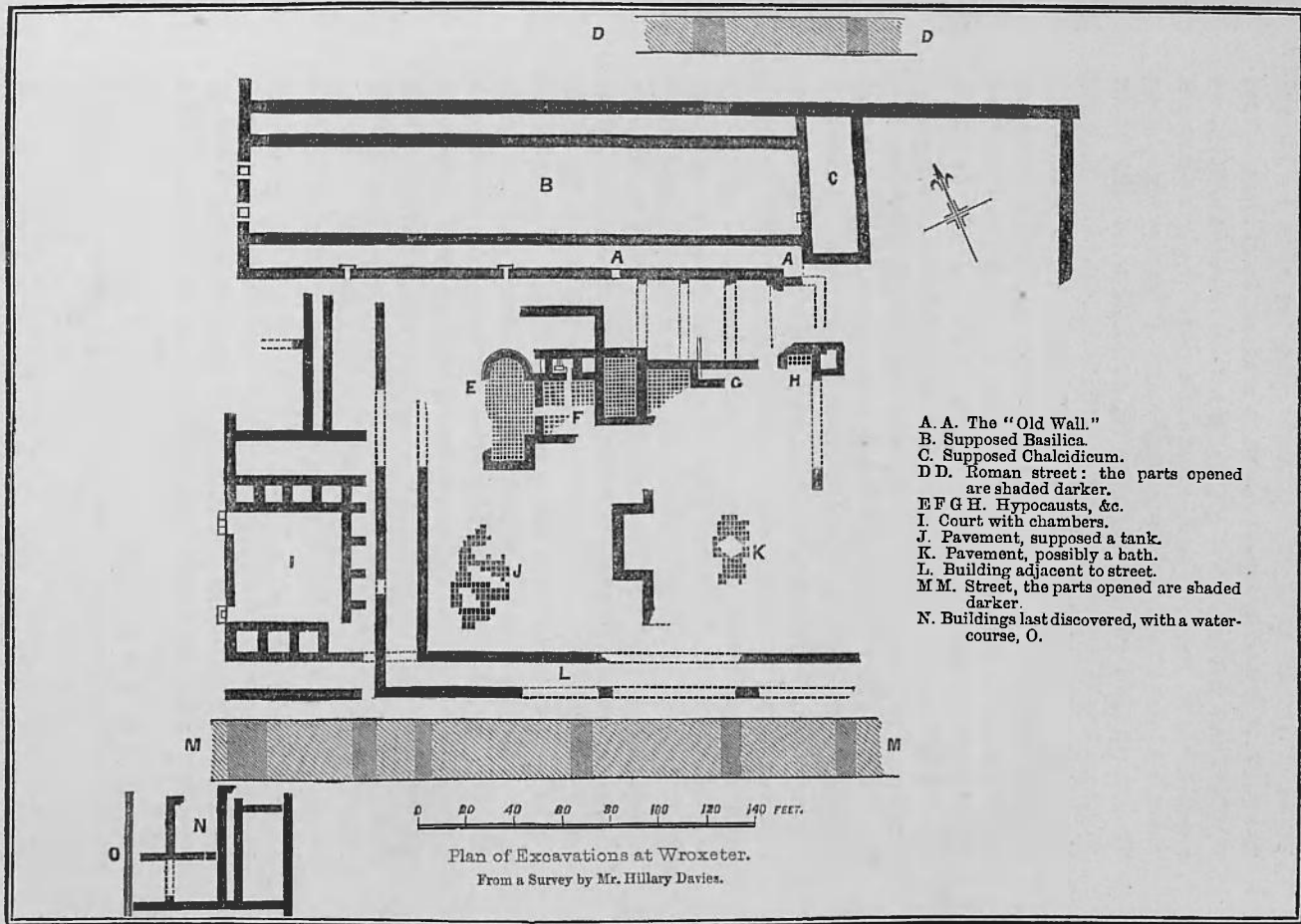
Neither of the side passages appeared to have been uniformly paved. A tessellated pavement was found at the eastern end of the northern aisle, and a fragment of a similar floor has been met with about the middle of the southern aisle. The walls separating these aisles from the central portion were 4 ft. thick; the outer wall, of which a portion remains, is only 3 ft. thick; the outer wall to the north, 3 ft. 9 in. In the middle of this wall appears to have been a doorway.

At the western end of the central area were found squared stones, which appeared to have been the basements of two columns, and this may have formed the entrance from the Forum, and this entrance faced the point where another building with a colonnade was found some years since.⁶ Several fragments of large columns, stone plinths, and one capital found by the side of the Old Wall, sufficed to show that the building was not devoid of architectural ornament. At the east end of the central area was a step,

⁵ It will be remembered that the peristylum of the palace of Diocletian at Spalatro rests upon a wall some courses of

stone high, and that the columns in that instance support arches.

⁶ See p. 61 in this volume.



- A. A. The "Old Wall."
- B. Supposed Basilica.
- C. Supposed Chalcedicum.
- D. D. Roman street: the parts opened are shaded darker.
- E. F. G. H. Hypocausts, &c.
- I. Court with chambers.
- J. Pavement, supposed a tank.
- K. Pavement, possibly a bath.
- L. Building adjacent to street.
- M. M. Street, the parts opened are shaded darker.
- N. Buildings last discovered, with a water-course, O.

Plan of Excavations at Wroxeter.

From a Survey by Mr. Hillary Davies.

formed of a large square stone, which led to an opening in the wall, apparently a doorway, leading into an unpaved enclosure towards the east (c), as before mentioned, which seemed to have been an open court, as Mr. Wright supposed, but which I have little doubt was the *chalcidicum*.⁷ The northern wall of this large building is prolonged towards the east, and meets a wall at right angles; the space enclosed seems to have formed an open court or garden. The entire length of this north wall, as far as it has been traced, is more than 300 ft.; a hedge prevented further excavation. The pavement of a street (DD) has been discovered running parallel to this wall, so that the building appears to have stood at the angle made by the junction of two streets, and probably at one extremity of the Forum.⁸

Sufficient has been shown of this building to warrant the belief that it may have formed the Basilica or Hall of Justice of the Roman city. I need not say that such Basilicas were common, for every Roman city had its Town Hall; and it is believed that some of these after the introduction of Christianity were converted into churches. The Roman station of Borcovicus, *per lineam valli*, Housesteads in Northumberland, has a somewhat similar, but much smaller building, in the centre of the station.⁹

Contiguous to this building the foundation of another of considerable size has been discovered. (I in the plan.) The form has been distinctly ascertained, and may probably be that of a large dwelling-house. There is first the entrance court, paved with brick, in which a horse-shoe was found; at the side of this court are small chambers, which may have been occupied by slaves, or served as stores, for in these bones and other refuse have been found. The second court (J) seems

⁷ The *chalcidica* were chambers separated by partitions from the body of some *basilica*, or other large buildings. The name, as stated by Festus, was derived from the city of Chalcis. Vitruvius directs that they should be constructed at the ends of *basilica*, if the area were disproportionately long. An inscription discovered at Pompeii records the building and dedication of a *chalcidicum* and *crypto porticus*; the former being, as shown by the plan of the building, the vestibule. Such an enclosed space was necessary for the safe custody of goods remaining unsold. See Dr. Smith's Dictionary of Antiquities, under

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chalcidicum, and the plan of the *basilica* at Pompeii, *ibid.*, p. 131. That building, the largest structure in Pompeii, measures 220 ft. by 80 ft., and was situated on the most sheltered side of the Forum, at its south-west angle. The *basilica* at Treves measures 180 ft. by 90 ft.; the supposed *basilica* of Uriconium (240 ft. by 60 ft.) was longer than either of these but not so wide.

⁸ The form and dimensions of this building are shown in the ground-plan given in the Archæologia Cambrensis, vol. v. third series, p. 210; Gent. Mag. May, 1859, p. 451.

⁹ Bruce's Roman Wall, p. 190.

to have had the *impluvium* in the centre, but it has not yet been excavated; and on the north side the dwelling-rooms were laid open, under which were the hypocausts, described by Mr. Wright. One of these (E) had supported the floor of a room 37 ft. by 25 ft. including a semicircular projection at the end, common in Roman houses.¹ The floor of this room had been formed of concrete, but it had disappeared, with the exception of a mass, which was found adhering to the north-eastern corner. This floor, or *suspensura*, had been supported by more than 120 pillars, formed of flat square tiles, three feet high, and in perfect condition. During the suspension of the works, which unfortunately occurred, these pillars were nearly all overturned, and some of the bricks carried away. A passage through the eastern wall of this hypocaust led into another (F), the entrance being by an arch turned with tiles. This entrance is approached on the outer side by three steps, each of a single stone. Another small room was found to the east of this, eight feet square, with a herring-bone pavement, similar to that in the area of the Basilica. A third hypocaust was found under a room of small size (G), and a passage with a drain under it, occupying the whole breadth, and running at right angles to the Old Wall. The floor of this drain is formed of large roofing tiles, the flanged edges turned upwards. To the south of this passage a fourth hypocaust was found.²

The side of the Old Wall has on its face arches, which seem to be the springings of vaulted roofs, and transverse walls have been discovered, answering to all these arches, and evidently belonging to a series of vaulted chambers. In one of them was found a quantity of charred wheat, possibly indicating that these chambers had served as granaries.

The walls of the buildings, even those serving as partitions, are in no instances less than three feet thick, and the

¹ A large curved stone which had formed part of this apse now lies beside it. It is of the sandstone of the country, and measures 7 ft. 2 in. by 5 ft. 9 in.; it is one foot in thickness. Mortar adheres to the upper surface, and an iron cramp still remains fixed in it. Unfortunately these stones have, for the most part, been carried away for building purposes. Large steps and corner stones are removed, which if kept *in situ*, would prove of great service in forming a correct idea of the buildings, but unfortunately the

excavations are not allowed to be kept open, and, as the foundations must be covered up, these stones are thought too valuable to be buried again.

² A series of baths has since been laid open at the eastern portion of the building. These are small and seem only adapted to the requirements of a private dwelling. At present there is some difficulty in tracing the drain, and ascertaining the means by which these baths were supplied with water.

masonry well put together. The inside walls were covered with a thick layer of mortar, painted in fresco; the fragments which remained had preserved the colours very fresh. The ornaments are simple and tasteful; on one piece of cement three or four large letters had been scratched with some instrument, but this was wantonly broken before they had been deciphered.³ In one of the rooms the interior wall was tessellated.⁴ The cubes were of black and white stone, arranged chequerwise. Mr. Wright considers this to be a mode of ornamentation of unique character; if, however, my recollection is correct, I observed this kind of wall-decoration in a Roman villa discovered at Box, in Wiltshire, five miles from Bath.

Roofing tiles have been found, but the houses appear to have been generally roofed with thick slabs of micaceous sandstone or flag from the coal measures, ascertained to have been brought from Barrow, near Bridgenorth. These are scattered about in considerable numbers, sometimes lozenge-shaped, but more frequently in the form of elongated hexagons. A considerable quantity of window glass has been found, occasionally in large fragments, and exceeding an eighth of an inch in thickness, of good quality, although time and decay have destroyed its transparency. Numerous relics of iron have been discovered, consisting of clamps, rivets, and nails, with other objects, now to be seen in the Museum at Shrewsbury.

Lead and tin have also been found during the recent excavations; some relics formed of lead had been brought to light previously, and it will be remembered by those who attended the meeting of the Institute at Shrewsbury, that a leaden sarcophagus found at Wroxeter was exhibited in the temporary Museum; within this was an urn filled with calcined bones. The existence of lead mines in the Stiperstones on the Welsh borders, where pigs of lead have been found,⁵ might account for the occurrence of numerous objects of that metal at Urioconium. Mr. Wright mentions especially a small bowl of lead, of simple form, about three inches in diameter, of which he has given a representation.⁶ Among

³ The remains of this wall inscription are figured in the report by Mr. Wright and Dr. Johnson. *Archæol. Camb.* vol. v. third series, p. 218.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁵ Noticed in *Archæol. Journal*, vol. xv. p. 32.

⁶ *Gent. Mag.* May, 1850, p. 455.

the relics deposited in the Museum at Shrewsbury are two heads and some bones of the *bos longifrons*, a species now extinct.⁷ A dog's skull, about five inches long,⁸ may deserve notice, also the antlers of a very large red deer (*cervus elaphus*), and portions of a species of elk, conjectured to be the *strongyloceros spelæus*. Some tiles have been found with the impressions of dogs' feet, and also the marks of the foot of a kid or young fawn.

As is usual on all Roman sites, great quantities of pottery have been found, and some of a peculiar kind, white, and of a porous texture, and which is ascertained to have been made of the clay found at Brosely, where the Romans probably had a pottery; specimens also of black Upchurch ware have occurred, and Samian in abundance. I noticed a fragment of a *mortarium*, having the surface set with granular pieces of silex to assist the process of trituration. Among other fictile relics was found the mouth of a large amphora, in the form of a boldly executed mask of a female face. Some portions of glass vessels have also been dug up. Personal ornaments have been discovered in great variety, also spindles, and weights (one $11\frac{1}{2}$ oz. in stone, another $20\frac{1}{4}$ oz. in lead, and a third $2\frac{1}{2}$ oz.), similar to those found lately in the Tiber, and exhibited by the Rev. J. Beck in the museum of the Institute at Carlisle.⁹ In the British Museum a weight is preserved found at Wroxeter. Among the more remarkable discoveries, however, may be mentioned the skeletons and human bones, which deserve notice on account of the peculiar position in which they have been found, and may serve to show the suddenness of the surprise, and the fierceness of the conflict when the city was destroyed. Mr. Wright observes that, so long as the labours of the excavators were confined to the large public buildings to the north of the Old Wall, no bones were met with which could be identified as human, but when they came upon the domestic buildings to the south of these, they discovered skeletons in one of the

⁷ The bones of an ox were found with a layer of burnt wood in one of the hypocausts.

⁸ A bas-relief of a dog, carrying a young deer thrown over his back has been lately found at Bath: the head of this hound seems to present some re-

semblance in form to the cranium found at Wroxeter.

⁹ See the catalogue of articles found at Uriconium, and now in the Museum at Shrewsbury; given in the Guide to the Ruins, by Mr. Wright.

smaller hypocausts (H). The bones of at least three or four individuals were disinterred, and the skull of a child was found at a spot which appeared to be the corner of a court. In the small hypocaust adjoining F, on the East, three skeletons were found, one of which appeared to be seated or crouching in a corner, the other two lying extended by the side of the wall; it appeared from the skull and jaw of the former, that these were the remains of a very old man; the others appeared to be of females.¹ At a short distance from the skeleton of the old man lay, in a small heap, 132 copper coins, extending from Claudius to Valens, *i. e.*, from about 52 A.D. to 379.² With these were found small iron nails and decayed wood, showing apparently that the coins had been enclosed in a wooden coffer. These skeletons were no doubt the remains of persons who had sought safety by hiding themselves in the hypocausts, and had there perished. Mr. Wright observes, that the discovery of these coins with the skeleton is a fact of considerable value, as showing what was the currency ordinarily carried about by a private individual, and what was the current money at the time in Britain. The fact is also deserving of attention, since it may give us some clue to the date of the destruction of the city. That event could not be earlier than A.D. 379, and may not have been much later. It certainly is an interesting coincidence, that, in A.D. 383, a few years after the date of the latest coin discovered, Maximus, then in command of the Roman forces in Britain, having stirred up the spirit of revolt, withdrew the garrisons from the cities, and took all the Roman soldiers into Gaul, with those Britons who were fit to bear arms. Britain is represented to have been left destitute of troops and unable to defend herself. Maximus, in A.D. 388, lost the object of his ambition with his life, but many years elapsed before Britain was again adequately garrisoned; native troops, moreover, which Maximus had brought into Gaul, refused to return to Britain,³ and settled in Armorica, probably on account of the wretched state of their own

¹ Two more skeletons have been found in another small hypocaust, which has since been opened.

² A catalogue of these coins has been given by Mr. Roach Smith in Mr. Wright's Guide to the Ruins of Uriconium, p. 37.

³ The chief authorities in regard to

this period are the writings of the following historians of the earlier part of the fifth century. See Zosimus, *Hist. Ecc. Nov. lib. i. c. 64*; Socrates, *Hist. Ecc. lib. i. c. 2*; Sozomenus, *Hist. Ecc. lib. i. c. 5*. These passages may be seen in the *Monumenta Hist. Brit.*

country. In A.D. 396 the Britons sent ambassadors to Rome for succours against the Picts and Scots, the country having been drained so completely by Maximus. This was only seventeen years later than the latest coin which has been deciphered in the hoard above mentioned.

We know that there were constant internal troubles previous to the final withdrawal of the Roman power. It was then that efforts were made by the Romanised Britons to select their new ruler; and when a man of more than ordinary capacity had been found, in Constantine, called the Usurper, originally a common soldier, he could not remain content with British rule, but aspired at more extended empire.⁴ Then again the British cities were left weakened by the withdrawal of their garrisons, and, in A.D. 409, the Britons and some of the Celtic nations revolted from the Romans. Zosimus relates that the barbarians beyond the Rhine ravaging everything at pleasure, compelled both the inhabitants of the Britannic Island, as well as some of the Celtic nations, to revolt from the Romans and to live independent. The people, therefore, of Britain, taking up arms, freed the cities from the invading barbarians. This defection of Britain and the Celtic nations took place during the time of Constantine's usurpation, the barbarians rising up in consequence of his neglect of government.⁵ Zosimus states that the whole of Armorica and other provinces of Gaul, imitating the Britons, liberated themselves in like manner, expelling the Roman præfects, and setting up a civil policy according to their own inclination. In A.D. 411, Britain was reduced to the greatest extremity. The termination of the Roman dominion may be fixed in the year A.D. 426 or 427.⁶

Besides the skeletons in the hypocaust, the remains of a child were found, and other human bones; but one of the most remarkable incidents is the discovery of numerous skulls near the point where is the passage across the Severn, which appears to have been guarded by a fort or tower. During the temporary interruption of the excavations at the Old Wall, the labourers were employed upon the southern extremity of the city, where there are traces of fortifications

⁴ Zosimus, lib. vi. cc. 1—6; Sozomenus, lib. ix. c. 11.

⁵ Pauli Orosii Hist. lib. v. c. 22. Orosius lived about A.D. 417.

⁶ Mr. Roach Smith, from examination

of the coins, however, thinks that they indicate the very latest period of Roman occupation. (See Guide to Uriconium, p. 40; Numismatic Chronicle, vol. xx. p. 81.)

which secured the passage of the river. I have ever regarded this as one of the most interesting points of the city. When the top of the highest mound was trenched, the walls of a square tower were partially uncovered. Here was found the bearded head of a statue in stone, with a horn upon the brow, which led to the conjecture that it may have been a figure either of a River God or of the God Pan.⁷ A clay mould for casting coins was also found here, having the impress of a coin of Julia Domna, the wife of Severus. A silver coin of this empress was found in the excavations of the Old Wall, which fits the impress exactly.⁸

I have alluded to the excavations made by the side of the river, at what may be called the Water Tower. Near this the remains of a bridge were believed formerly to exist. In the orchard adjoining the Severn, and on the opposite side of the Watling Street Road, five skulls were found, with fragments of others. Of these skulls four were distorted in form. The excavations being continued in the orchard, sixteen more skulls and skeletons were discovered. These, as far as they have been examined, are not all deformed; some are distorted like those before noticed, and it has been alleged that this distortion may be the effect of posthumous pressure; but a different opinion has also been entertained.⁹ It was more probably some congenital deformity; these crania may be those of a particular tribe, or race of men. If this be the case, a very curious enquiry is suggested for our consideration. We know that some races distorted the skull in infancy; and it would be a very interesting question to

⁷ It appears to me, however, to be mediæval, and I suspect was either brought here, or carved when the church was built. There are many small sculptures in the church tower, which seem to have been brought from some other building.

⁸ Hence some persons have inferred that Urioconium had the privilege of multiplying the imperial coin. It will be remembered that clay moulds were found in 1847 at Ryton, near Condever, not far from Wroxeter, one with the head of Julia Domna. See p. 62, in this volume. Clay moulds were also found in 1722.

⁹ The reasons alleged are as follows:—Posthumous pressure can scarcely be admitted as the cause of this distortion, because pressure would break the skulls into fragments, not distort them, as they

are absolutely inflexible. A skull taken out of the ground is like wet biscuit; it is not practicable to bend it in the least. How then could these skulls be thus completely altered in shape? Besides, if bones did become soft in the ground and were liable to become changed in shape, these results would often happen, which we do not find to be the case. Bones out of a churchyard would very frequently be found distorted, and anatomists would find skeletons spoiled if left too long in macerating. It must be remembered also that if pressure were to act, it would not distort but collapse, *i.e.*, press in the sides of the skull, and this may be seen, but never without fracture. It may therefore be concluded that the effect is not due to pressure.

ascertain, if practicable, by anatomical comparison, to what race these people belonged. The attention recently bestowed on craniology by Dr. Thurnham, Mr. Barnard Davis, and other skilful comparative anatomists, may hereafter enable us to form some just conclusion on this subject.¹

The skeletons found in the excavations near the river were not lying in a confused heap, but the bodies had apparently been decently laid out at the time of the interment, and buried possibly at the spot where the conflict had taken place. This, it must be admitted, seems scarcely consistent with the conjecture which some have entertained, that these remains may present to us vestiges of the savage slaughter of the inhabitants, who, when the city was attacked probably by a surprise from the north-west, may after obstinate defence have rushed to the bridge, and there perished before a passage could be effected. This, it may be remembered, was the direct road to Caerleon, where the second legion was stationed, and also to the garrisoned towns, Glevum, and Durocornovium or Corinium. Much, doubtless, remains concealed, which might serve to throw light upon the final catastrophe, not less than on the condition of this great city and its inhabitants; and the hope must be expressed that the increasing interest of the investigation may encourage public liberality, so as to enable the Committee to pursue their undertaking.

The following conclusions may, as I conceive, be drawn from the results of the excavations, so far as they have extended. The fact seems established, that the remarkable fragment of masonry known as the "Old Wall" formed part of a large public building of the *basilica* type, with a *chalcidicum* at its East end, and beyond this a court or *atrium*. It is worthy of remark that this structure faced the portico of the building discovered in 1854, as described in this Journal;² the space between the two being about forty yards. A street of considerable width has also been traced on the northern side of the *basilica*, paved with small rolled stones from the river, occupying the central

¹ Representations of crania found at Wroxeter may be seen in Mr. Wright's Guide to the Ruins, pl. 12. A distorted cranium, closely resembling those at Wroxeter, was found with Saxon remains

at Stone, Bucks, and it is figured in the Crania Britannica, p. 38, where a notice of distortions of the skull is given by Mr. Davis.

² See p. 61, in this volume.

part of the street (D, D.), with a row of kerb stones, and a space on each side apparently unpaved.

The front portion of the building now under excavation runs flush with the front of the basilica, and extends to the length of 80 feet. This I have supposed to be a large private dwelling, possibly that of the chief magistrate; a careful consideration of the plan seems to lead to such an opinion, although Mr. Wright appears to think otherwise. There is first the entrance court or *peristylum*, with the chambers around it, one of which contained charcoal; in another were bones, horns, &c. The court (I in the plan), 40 ft. square, was paved neatly with bricks in herring-bone fashion, which in places had been damaged and repaired while the Romans had possession. Mr. Wright supposes that the larger entrance was for horses and carts, and part of a horse shoe has been found there. This court would therefore resemble that of old houses, especially in France, which had a court in front and small buildings in the wings, forming a square. Two portions of capitals were found here, which may have ornamented the entrance. The steps of an approach to the court from the south-west were found, very much worn; this may have led from the space in front into the court; the entrance for carriages was by a gentle incline. Beyond this court eastward seems to have been the central court, with the *impluvium* (J),³ coinciding in fashion with that of the Pompeian house at the Crystal Palace, to which it bears some resemblance. Beyond this, at the north-east extremity, and near to the "Old Wall," appear to have been private baths (G, H.), and a drain for conveyance of water has been found not far from them. On the north side of these courts were the large room and other chambers, underneath which the hypocausts (E, F) before described were found. The whole appears to have been a large private residence, very substantially built, and the front, being flush with the basilica, I am inclined to think, looked towards the forum, on the opposite side of which stood the temple or other building, the site of which is now occupied by Mr. Stanier's new farm buildings.

As the excavations proceed southward no doubt this may be determined by the remains of other buildings being found; and if, as I am disposed to believe, the east side of

³ This is stated as far as could be ascertained from the state of the excavations, on occasion of my visit, July, 1859.

the forum is actually being excavated, the most interesting discoveries may be anticipated.

The forum of Uriconium was probably larger than that of Pompeii, for the city itself was larger; at Pompeii there were twelve public buildings in and around the forum. As yet only three or four buildings have been brought to light in the forum of Uriconium.⁴ Pompeii had an amphitheatre as well as two theatres within its walls; we may reasonably conjecture that Uriconium had one public structure of each description. Two streets appear to have led into the forum, namely that between the ford and the city gates, near which the monumental stones were found, called the Watling Street, and that of which the pavement has been laid bare, which ran past the basilica and entered the forum at the northern extremity, keeping the line of the present road from Ironbridge to Shrewsbury. The excavations, I regret to state, at present are under great disadvantages. The excavation Committee dare not carry away the soil because the excavated portions are again to be covered up, according to agreement. The soil therefore accumulates greatly through the depth at which the foundations lie, and must be heaped upon some other portion of the ground not excavated, but under which remains exist, and it has therefore to be removed repeatedly, at a serious sacrifice of time and labour, whilst the expense is increased proportionably. By being obliged to cover up within a certain time whatever has been excavated, the general effect of these most interesting excavations is entirely lost. How much were it to desired that some arrangement might be effected, with a view to keeping the excavated portions open for some longer period, so as to enable the antiquary to trace at one view the plan of Uriconium with its public edifices, presenting the first exemplification of a Roman city in Britain. It is not too much to say that it may now justly be regarded as a national monument, supplying evidence of no slight value as subsidiary to history; and that the explorations now in progress are well entitled to public consideration and assistance. An effort, more especially, on the part of the

⁴ These are the basilica, the temple or other building opposite, the large house now under excavation, and the building with a hypocaust, described as a bath,

found some years since. The position of these buildings, gives the rectangular shape and the probable space which the forum of the city would occupy.

learned and antiquarian societies of our country might doubtless avail, in the present difficult position of the enterprise, to secure more liberal facilities, and preserve the remains which may be discovered from being interred anew without delay. I would also invite attention to the fate of the columns, sculptured stones, and relics of ancient buildings, which are not removed to the Museum at Shrewsbury, and which for the most part are carried away for building purposes.⁵ It were very desirable that all such fragments might be preserved *in situ*; on the spot each tells its tale, and has an essential value. Numerous objects of large dimensions, scarcely suitable for preservation in a museum, where they would occupy too much space, might thus convey instruction and gratification to the future visitor of this remarkable Roman site.

An inscribed column, apparently a Roman mile-stone, with a few letters discernible, is preserved in Mr. Oatley's garden. Considering how few remain of the many thousands that must once have existed in Britain (not more I believe than three), this is a very interesting relic and should be carefully preserved. It is figured in Mr. Wright's "Guide to the Ruins of Uriconium," and that interesting little volume contains also an engraving of the font in Wroxeter Church, formed of the base and part of the shaft of a large Roman column.

Some conclusions may perhaps be suggested as to the destruction of the city and the great accumulation of earth above the ruins. The opinion has sometimes been put forth that the Roman houses in Britain were not wholly built of stone, but consisted of stone and wood; they were wooden superstructures on stone foundations. This may very probably have been the case where wood of excellent quality, like English oak, was in abundance. Whilst the large public edifices were entirely built of stone, the upper portions of private buildings were probably of wood; hence a city like Uriconium, if chiefly built of wood, when set on fire, would be burnt to the basement story, and the whole area be covered with a deep stratum of ashes with scattered roofing tiles, the blackened walls of the chief buildings alone

⁵ The gateway of the churchyard at Wroxeter is formed of columns with capitals of different styles; these might

deserve to be transferred to the Museum, and are scarcely suitable to the approach to a parish church.

standing out of the dark mass of burnt matter. The rains and snows of a few seasons would soon decompose this mass, and make it capable of vegetation, which would become of a very rank description, rapidly forming an accumulation on the surface of the ruins. Such desolate spots were doubtless shunned as places of habitation, and superstition generally clothed them with imaginary terrors. The Saxon population avoided the site of the Roman city as unsuited to their habits of life; Charlton Hill and Donnington, in the vicinity of Wroxeter, were more favourable places for Saxon settlements, as their names suggest, than desolate Uriconium, which served as a harbour for robbers and outcasts, or a quarry for building materials in mediæval times. After centuries the site was gradually brought under cultivation, but not before a deep stratum of vegetable matter had accumulated over its blackened foundations. Local tradition may deserve mention, that the city was destroyed by fire, and the "Black Land," the local name given to the ground comprised within the circuit of the walls, and especially to the portion adjoining the "Old Wall," which is remarkable for its fertility, may be the result of the conflagration.

We regret that as yet no more inscriptions or altars have been found, or any other lettered memorial, except the fragments of vases, bearing potters' stamps, and the few letters on the wall stucco, before mentioned. A rich harvest of inscribed stones may probably be obtained when the Committee feel themselves in a position to examine the line of Roman road without the walls, where the sepulchral monuments were found in 1752. We know by what imperfect mode of examination these were procured. The ground was only pierced here and there with iron rods, near the place where the first inscribed stone had been turned up by the plough.⁶ A more systematic investigation would doubtless be productive of many interesting memorials; at present, however, the investigations within the city walls must occupy much time, and will probably exhaust the limited resources at the disposal of the excavation Committee. The sculptured capitals lately taken out of the river, would lead us to suppose that a temple existed

⁶ The Roman road is said to be traceable through one of the adjoining farms; the borders of it, if carefully examined,

would probably yield some sepulchral remains and inscribed stones.

not far from the present ford, and opposite what may be called the Water Tower.

It has been well observed by Mr. Wright that, by the examination of the objects brought to light during the late excavations, "we obtain an insight into the condition of the inhabitants of Roman Britain, and to what degree they enjoyed the luxuries and comforts of life."⁷ We see that they possessed a great majority of the refinements of modern society, far more than can be traced among the population of the middle ages. We are taught even the character of their food by remains of edible animals. The comparison of other objects enables us to judge to a great degree of the state and extent of manufactures and commerce. We are thus enabled to form a truer notion of the manner in which this country had been inhabited and governed during nearly four centuries; and we have the further hope of eventually discovering monuments which will throw some light on the more particular history of the neighbourhood in these remote ages."⁸

⁷ The personal ornaments usually found on Roman sites have occurred in great variety at Wroxeter. The discovery of considerable remains, as supposed, of window glazing is a fact deserving of special mention, among evidences of the civilised condition of the inhabitants of Uriconium. Tesselated floors also of good workmanship have been discovered, which may be regarded as comparatively uncommon decorations in more remote parts of Britain, and rarely found in the

northern districts of the country.

⁸ Guide to Uriconium, p. 76. A second edition of the Guide has just been issued, in which are enumerated the recent discoveries and articles added to the Museum, and an engraving given of the column mentioned at p. 67 in this volume. The wheel of a chariot, or other carriage, has very lately been exhumed, having an iron tire, 3 feet 3 inches in diameter. The references given to the Guide in this memoir are to the first edition.

We have the gratification to announce, that while this memoir was in the press, the facilities so much desired have been most courteously conceded by the Duke of Cleveland. His Grace, at the request of several influential archæologists, has liberally granted to the Excavation Committee four acres, with permission that the remains discovered shall be kept open to view for public instruction and gratification, so long as may be thought desirable. It will be a satisfaction to the members of the Institute, that an appeal addressed to the Duke of Cleveland by their noble President, and expressing the warm interest with which the Society regarded the important undertaking at Wroxeter, was received with very courteous consideration. His Grace, in acknowledging Lord Talbot's communication on behalf of the Institute, gave the assurance of his liberal intention to meet, so far as practicable, the wishes of antiquaries, for the furtherance of scientific objects.

The Committee of the Institute would acknowledge with pleasure the kindness of Mr. Hillary Davies, of Shrewsbury, in supplying, from a Survey recently made by him, the Plan of the Excavations, which accompanies the foregoing memoir.