

ART. XV.—*Notes on a Roman Well discovered in the
Courtyard of the Blue Bell Inn, Scotch Street, Carlisle.*
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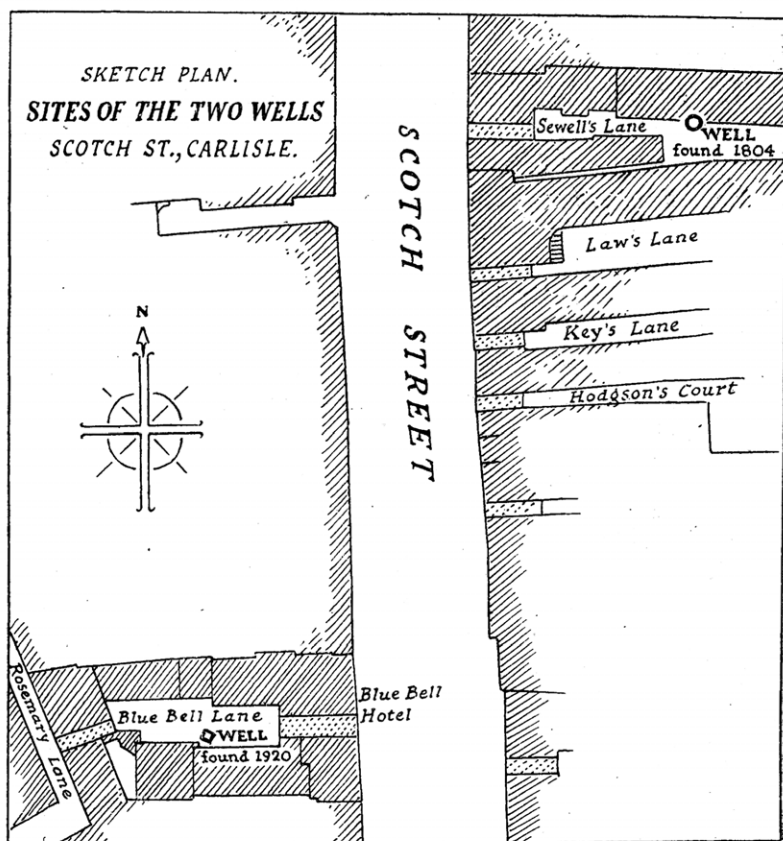
Read at Carlisle, September 1st, 1920.

THE buildings comprising this old hostelry consist of a front facing Scotch Street, and two wings running back at right angles enclosing a narrow Courtyard entered by a passage with an elliptical archway in the centre of the main front. There is a characteristic staircase leading to a fine room (about 50 feet by 20 feet) on the first floor. This apartment is symmetrically laid out ; it has a range of windows overlooking the street, a small music gallery in the centre of the opposite side, and a fireplace at each end. From the evidence of the architecture the building appears to date from the closing years of the 18th century ; and it possesses features of interest which, if opportunity permitted, might advantageously be worked out in conjunction with the earlier history of the site.

The Central Control Board, having acquired the property, decided to make such alterations therein as would render it suitable for the type of licensed premises which they desire to achieve. The alterations in question chiefly concern the ground floor, especially the original back wings and the various unimportant buildings which had subsequently grown up around the Courtyard.

On the 22nd July, 1920, in the course of excavating for the piers of the proposed new addition, at a position near the wall of the back wing on the South side, disturbed earth and some large stones were found at a depth of about 6 feet below the level of the Courtyard.

Deeper digging revealed the existence of a rectangular well, lined with rough rubble (red sandstone) in stones of considerable size. The internal measurements at the top were 3 feet by 2 feet 10 inches: the position, in reference to the adjacent buildings, is indicated on the accompanying plan; and it had clearly set a limit to the extent of this wing in a Northerly direction.



It may be mentioned, for what it is worth, that the orientation of the well brings its alignment parallel with

that of the portion of the city wall now visible at the top of Corporation Road.

The well had apparently long gone dry, and was full of loose stones and wet earth. This was slowly removed; and almost immediately the pointed end of a larch pump-tree was discovered. This proved to be 12 in. in average diameter, with a 3 in. bore, and 16 ft. long, its lower end being pointed also. Still further down were two other pump-trees 10 ft. 6 in. and 6 ft. 6 in. long, respectively; the upper one with average diameter of 9 in., the lower with average diameter of $7\frac{1}{2}$ in., and both with a 3 in. bore. These were of oak; the top of the lower one was fitted with an iron collar and two short pieces of chain, its lower extremity being plugged solid for a distance of 12 inches, the bore ending with two rectangular holes on opposite sides.

The well, gradually narrowing to 2 feet 4 inches by 2 feet 2 inches, terminated 41 feet below the present ground-level of the yard on a stone slab 6 inches thick with a hole in the centre, 4 inches in diameter.

The filling material was carefully screened and the following articles were found at varying depths:—

- (a) A small piece of very thin sheet glass, semi-opaque and iridescent.
- (b) A segment of a glass bottle (the diameter would have been about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches) green in colour and somewhat iridescent.
- (c) Two sherds of earthenware—apparently part of the rim and of the bottom and side of a cooking-pot.
- (d) A small piece of Samian pottery—part of a vase—with characteristic panel and ornament.

In order to resist the future lateral pressure arising from the weight on the piers of the new building, it was deemed necessary to fill up the well with concrete; and this has now been done.

Taking all the circumstances into consideration, there seems to be no reason for doubting that the date of the well is that of the Roman occupation of Britain. It would be of value to set down, in the form of a chart, the number and exact position of other similar wells which have been found in this neighbourhood. It is, at least, an interesting discovery, and sets free a flow of conjecture.

[The plan, from materials supplied by the author and by Mr. J. H. Martindale, F.R.I.B.A., shows the position of the well and also that of the Roman well in Sewell's Lane, found in 1804, and described in Whellan's *Cumberland*, p. 139. The interest of the new find is enhanced by the fact of a comparatively modern re-use of the Roman work, as shown by the pumps of larch-wood. A detailed plan of the well has been given by the author to the Society and is deposited in the Society's cabinet at Tullie House. —Ed.].
