

DERBYSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL  
AND  
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

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Roman Remains at Bradwell.

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By JOHN WARD, F.S.A.

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**I**N January, 1896, the remains of a Roman oven were found in this Peak village, and through an oversight no notice of the discovery was sent to last year's *Journal*. The discovery was made while levelling a piece of ground on which a stable had stood. After pulling down this stable, it was observed that an elevation in the ground had been taken advantage of to support one of the walls. It was found to contain a strongly-built structure, but the labourers had removed most of it before it attracted the attention of Mr. Francis Harrison, a gentleman of Bradwell, who was struck with the Roman character of the masonry. He induced the owner to stay his hand until it had been properly examined.

A few days later, Mr. J. D. Leader, F.S.A., of Sheffield, and other gentlemen inspected the structure. Mr. Leader communicated notes on the discovery to the Society of Antiquaries,

which are printed in vol. xvi., No. 1 (new series), of the *Proceedings* of that Society, pages 95-6. Another account of the "find" was contributed to the *Sheffield Telegraph*, of January 20th, 1896. From these two sources a full description of the structure may be drawn.

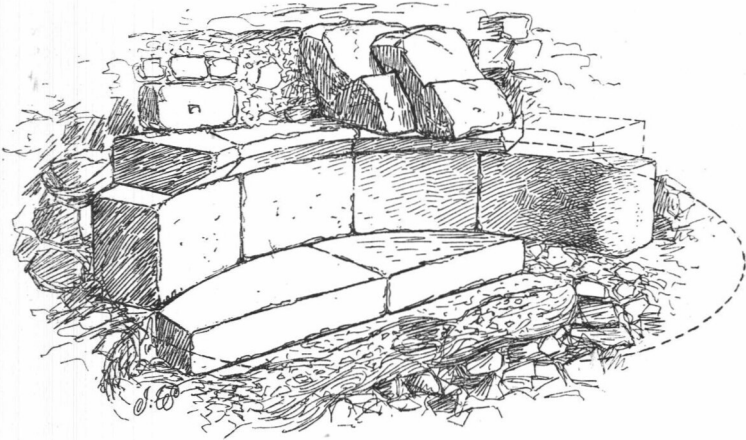
Mr. Leader describes it as a "circular building of finely wrought stone, well put together without mortar, and probably of Roman workmanship. The whole formed a circular chamber, 8 ft. 9 ins. in diameter, and not more than 20 ins. in height. There had been an entrance on the east side, and beneath this a shallow pit, 30 ins. square (the foundation stones of which are remaining), into which ashes from the chamber could be raked."

"All that now remains is a segment of the circle, 6 ft. 8 ins. in diameter (? length). The floor of the chamber was formed of close-fitting and smoothly dressed sandstone flags, 6 ins. in thickness, resting on a rubble foundation. The underside of one of these stones was seen to be roughly dressed, in diagonal lines, with a pick. The sides of the chamber were formed of a single row of dressed stones, each one curved to form the circle, and standing 12 ins. high. On these rested a projecting corbel table,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  ins. deep, and also wrought to form the circle. On this rested the first row of stones that went to form the roof. The roofing stones were not worked to the curve of the circle. The key-stone, with its lewis hole, had unfortunately been broken up and used in the building of a cottage."

The accompanying drawing is taken from photographs kindly lent by Mr. Leader, but the perspective is slightly altered so as to show the construction more clearly. The lower surface of the roof was obviously flat. Two of the voussoirs are *in situ*, and it will be noticed that they are of peculiar shape, and are "joggled." The *Sheffield Telegraph* description of this roof is as follows:—"On the top of the cornice were the roof stones, the bottom being flat, half the upper part convex, the other half with a plain surface running back obliquely from the top edge of the convexity. That was the first row; the second one,

which was placed on the top of it, having a concavity formed to fit into the convexity of the one supporting it, the whole roof being dome-shaped, and pieced together by a method of dove-tailing without mortar, and finished off by a well-fitting key-stone." The statement that the roof was dome-shaped refers probably to its outward appearance.

"The stone," to again quote the *Sheffield Telegraph*, "is skilfully worked, and is altogether different from anything to be found in the more modern buildings in Bradwell. Further than



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this, the Red Sandstone of which it (the oven) is composed is nowhere found amongst the rocks of the district, and must have been transported some distance, probably from Lancashire, as the Romans had good roads from that county into Derbyshire."

The writer of that article describes the structure as a potter's kiln; but there can be no doubt that Mr. Leader's surmise is nearer the truth. "No traces of Roman tiles or pottery were seen among the *débris*. The stones bore marks of fire, and the whole may have formed a baker's oven heated by burning wood within it, and, after the ashes had been raked out, then receiving the bread or other food to be baked."

Since compiling the above, my young friend, Mr. W. H. Salt, of Buxton, has sent me some particulars he has gleaned of an ancient interment found in Bradwell, near the above oven, last Spring. The skeleton, he was informed, was much decayed, and appeared to have belonged to an adult. No particulars could be obtained as to its attitude, whether extended or contracted. It lay immediately below the turf, in a covered cist of sandstone and limestone flags, which had an east and west direction; its dimensions are given as 3 ft. long, 2 ft. wide, and 2 ft. deep. With the skeleton was an iron spear-head about 7 ins. long, much rusted, and with strong mid-rib and socket devoid of rivet holes. This spear-head lay at the west end of the cist, but its point was towards the east. In the cist were also a leaden spindle-whorl, button, and coin. The spindle-whorl was 1 in. diameter and about  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. thick. Its upper surface was decorated with five raised fillets so arranged as to suggest that a five-pointed star was intended. The button consisted of a disc of copper about  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. in diameter, with a small ring attached to the back. It was decorated with small hollows inlaid with gold. The coin, unfortunately, is lost. The spear-head, spindle-whorl, and button are now in the Buxton Free Library.

