

## Report of the Excavations in 1889-1900.

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By ROBERT HAMNETT, Hon. Secretary to the Melandra  
Excavation Fund.

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AT the Annual Meeting of this Society in March, 1898, I had the honour of reading a paper on Melandra Castle, and in speaking of the proposed excavation of the site said, "If this Society and the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society were to join hands in assisting a local committee, I am sure funds could be raised for the carrying out of this project." The paper was printed in the local newspapers and copies were sent to gentlemen interested in antiquarian research with the result that an excursion was arranged, and on the 9th of July, 1898, a representative number of gentlemen visited the site. Professor Boyd Dawkins and others expressed their opinion that an excavation would lead to important discoveries, and suggested that a fund should be raised for that purpose. The Lord of the Manor, the Right Honourable Lord Howard of Glossop, having been asked, and given his permission for the site to be thoroughly excavated, circulars were sent out by both the Derbyshire and Lancashire and Cheshire Societies to their members and to local gentlemen.

At the outset the response was tardy, but ultimately a considerable amount in subscriptions was paid into the fund by the two Societies and various gentlemen interested in our enterprise. A local committee was formed, viz., S. H. Wood, Esq., J.P., D.L., Mayor; Alderman J. Barnes, Deputy-Mayor; Rev. A. P. Hamilton-Wilson; Rev. H. T. Dudley; Rev. E. C. Collier; Rev.

Canon C. W. Tasker ; Mr. T. Barlow, J.P. ; Mr. H. Weetman, J.P. ; Mr. C. E. Knowles, J.P. ; Councillor J. Beeley ; Dr. W. J. Bowden ; Messrs. H. Broadhurst, C. Ellison, J. Hardman, T. T. Kenyon, J. Merry, R. B. Robinson, A. E. White, H. Wright. Hon. Treasurers : Rev. A. P. Hamilton-Wilson, Vicar of Glossop, and Mr. T. T. Kenyon, Bank Manager. Bankers : Manchester and Liverpool Banking Co. ; and Hon. Secretary, myself. The tenant of the farm was seen, and terms agreed upon as to the amount to be paid for compensation for disturbance and damage. Delay from various causes took place, and it was not until the 10th of August, 1899, that operations were commenced by digging a trench on the west side of the station which disclosed the boundary wall, the first course of stones (12 inches) being for 15 feet intact. The foundation consisted of large boulders embedded in clay, with three courses of flagstones on the top. The wall was four feet thick. The remains terminated at the western gateway. The foundation of the wall was traced for a considerable distance on this side, but the dressed stones had been taken away. The road, 18 feet wide from the west to the east gate, formed of gravel and lime, very hard and durable, was covered, near the entrance, with broken roofing tiles from the towers which flanked the gateways. Fragments of Roman pottery were found at the level of the foundation of the wall.

On the 17th of August, at the suggestion of the Rev. H. T. Dudley, a trench was dug on the east side, with the result that the wall on this side was found, and proved to be in better preservation than that on the west, three courses of stones still being *in situ*. Further examination brought to light the eastern entrance, the roadway being of the same width, and composed of similar material as the one on the west side, and the fragments of roofing tiles were more numerous. A piece of ornamented Samian ware was also found here. These discoveries being made known to the public through the medium of the local and Manchester newspapers, large numbers of visitors flocked to view the remains. Advantage was taken of this means of spreading forth what the intention of the Societies were. Lectures

were given on the site, and a collecting box provided, which eventually brought in the sum of £21 11s. 3d., and enabled the local committee to extend their operations. Mr. John Garstang, B.A., of Oxford, the well known Roman student, who was excavating the Roman Station at Ribchester, was strongly recommended by the Society as a most suitable authority to superintend and direct the work. He was, therefore, approached, and from the 24th of August to the 5th of October had the sole direction. Owing to being engaged in the Egyptian explorations, he could no longer spare the time, and the work was continued under my supervision until the 18th of November, when the weather becoming unfit and the funds being nearly exhausted, excavations were discontinued for the year. The members of the Derbyshire Society subscribed £6 5s., and the members of the Lancashire and Cheshire Society also gave us a very handsome contribution, but it was a pity that these subscriptions were not received sooner, as more men could have been employed whilst Mr. John Garstang was present, and the weather was most favourable for outdoor work.

The discoveries made are very interesting, and have far exceeded our initial expectations. The eastern entrance has been cleared to the foundations, which were found perfect, the guard chamber on the left, and a small tower on the right, having their lower courses of stone still remaining. The gateway was a double-arched one, and many of the arch stones were found in the *debris*, which enabled a portion of one of the pillars of an arch to be restored with the original stones found at its base. The towers at the four corners of the station were found, the north and south ones being in good preservation. Opposite and near to the south tower was discovered the floor of an oven; a complete tile and portions of others still remain. A considerable quantity of charcoal, the remains of the last fire, was strewn around. In the southern half of the camp was unearthed the Prætorium, which is twenty-five yards square, the walls in some instances coming within a few inches of the surface. The inner walls were two feet, and the outer walls three

feet, in thickness. Three rooms and a courtyard have been partially cleared, but much remains yet to be done. To the west of the Prætorium was found a tile floor fourteen feet by thirteen feet; probably the floor of the granary. The floor had evidently at some time been repaired with roofing and other tiles. Some of the original tiles, eight inches square and two inches thick, still remain in their original position. A complete tegula, or roofing tile, though in two parts, is very interesting, and probably unique. The walls uncovered have all been cemented with Earle's cement to protect them from the weather and from being damaged by visitors. Long trenches have been dug in all directions, revealing the clay floors of the soldiers' huts, roads, and workshops. From these have been recovered a considerable quantity of Roman pottery, iron nails, knife, discus or quoit, lead weights for weighing purposes and for fishing lines, sheet lead with nail holes in it, lead spindle whorl, fragments of glass tumblers, bottles, and window glass, the edges bevelled, a proof that the window-panes were made to standard sides. Similar glass has been found at the Roman "Station" at Wilderspool, and elsewhere. Various beads, probably belonging to ladies' necklaces, a silver denarius of Domitian, A.D. 81-96, a third brass coin of Hadrian, A.D. 117-139, and others not yet identified; whetstones, querns, and millstones, charcoal, the outer portions of bracken, which was most likely used for bedding purposes, bones and teeth of animals, oak spars and tiles, one marked V.V., possibly for the well-known motto of the 20th Legion.

The Roman pottery consists of nearly every kind of domestic article, such as amphoræ, ampullæ, ollæ, pateræ, mortaria, etc., many with potters' marks, but mostly in fragments. The Samian ware is ornamented with fowls, dogs, deer, boars, trees, etc., several pieces bearing the name of the potter. The Upchurch ware is of the usual network pattern, the meshes varying in size. A small portion of black ware, having a series of pellets arranged in squares, circles, and lines, may most probably be later British, probably portions of cinerary urns. The white

(made from pipe clay), red, grey, and black ware are mostly plain. There is also a portion of a loose strainer for straining wine.

A stone conduit, flagged, was uncovered for over sixty yards, but it is not yet traced to its full extent; it may possibly lead to a well, or source of the water supply, but is more probably the main drain of the camp. Outside the station, near to the west tower, was found a gravel road of nine feet wide, leading to a plateau in an adjoining field; compare the "Parade Ground" at Hardknott.

The Right Honourable Lord Howard of Glossop has consented to lease, at a nominal rental, for ten years, with power to renew at the expiration of the lease, two fields, the site of the Roman Station and the plateau not yet examined, to four trustees, viz., the Rev. A. P. Hamilton-Wilson, Mr. C. E. Knowles, J.P., Mr. Cyril Ellison, and myself. There will, therefore, in the future, be no compensation due to the tenants, and the excavation can be carried on in accordance with the amount of funds subscribed. It is desirable that every inch of the soil down to the level of the untouched or natural soil should be dug up and examined, except where there are buildings or roads.

Mr. F. Haverfield, M.A. Oxon., F.S.A., and Mr. W. H. St. John Hope, M.A., Secretary of the Society of Antiquities, have visited the excavations and expressed themselves satisfied with the work being done, their advice and suggestions being valuable and useful.

The local committee, to supervise better and carry out the work, and to give confidence to the public, have resolved themselves into a Society, "The Glossop and District Antiquarian and Natural History Society." Many local gentlemen have joined it, and there is every prospect of the antiquities of the district being searched out and permanently recovered. Photographs, to scale, have been taken by Mr. Sharpe of the important finds, and copies sent to "The National Photographic Record Association," who have deposited, with full details, a copy of each at the

British Museum. Plans have also been carefully drawn of the remains and site, so that when the work is completed, a description can be given of this Roman Station, which ought to prove interesting to all antiquaries and throw some light upon the Romans who were for several centuries in this part of North Derbyshire. Lord Howard of Glossop has removed the centurial stone from the farmhouse to a safer place; also the stones from the gable end of the house at Hatfield, which were found prior to 1846 at Mouslow Castle by the Rev. George Marsden. Mr. Charles Roeder and Mr. Joseph J. Phelps, of Manchester, have taken casts of them, and Mr. Phelps is devoting much time and study in endeavouring to fathom their meaning. Some of the symbols are certainly very early Christian, proving, without a doubt, that they had no connection with Melandra Castle, as has generally been supposed.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—Our own inspection of this work fully bears out its interesting character, and whilst we must accord the highest praise for the care and thought which has been devoted to it, we would prefer to see less attempt at restoration and a more rigid adherence to Mr. Garstang's rule that no stone should be removed from the position in which it is found, nor even disturbed.]