

ACCOUNT OF A ROMAN VILLA LATELY DISCOVERED AT BEDDINGTON, SURREY.

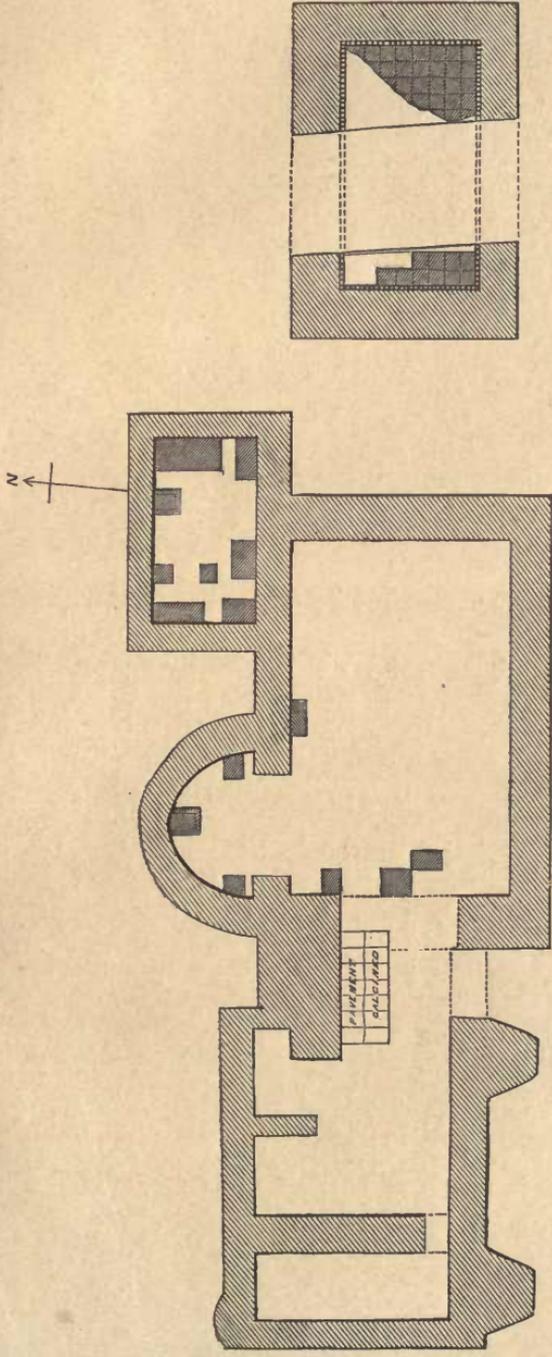
THE following account of the remains of a Roman villa, lately discovered at Beddington, was communicated to the Society of Antiquaries by John Addy, Esq., Stud. Inst. C. E., and by his permission is here republished:—

“Early in 1871, certain works in extension of the sewage irrigation system, for some years in operation under the Croydon Local Board of Health, were commenced upon lands, a portion of a farm of 170 acres, called the Park Farm, in Beddington, lying on the north side of the river Wandle, between Beddington Lane and Hackbridge railway station.

“Early in February the workmen engaged in cutting one of the ‘carriers’ running east and west, for the conveyance of the sewage to the land, at a depth of two feet, came across a wall, which they removed, and fragments of red earthenware tiles about nine inches square were thrown out. This attracted the author’s attention, but knowing that further excavations would have to be made on the same site, no additional search was continued at that time.

“On February 24th, in digging another carrier at right angles to the above, at a distance of fifty feet from the first discovery, many fragments of Roman pottery, chiefly of a coarse slate-coloured ware, were found. Several of these pieces were marked crossways with stripes, and upon being joined together as carefully as possible, proved to be an elegant vase, about nine inches high, and of a similar diameter. A piece of Samian ware, having a small pattern, was also picked up. Accompanying these were also large quantities of bones of animals and birds, and a sheep’s horn. These remains were about eighteen inches below the surface.

“In continuation of this carrier the workmen cut across a detached chamber, and at a distance of two or three hundred feet further south, found three coins in three separate places.



GROUND PLAN OF ROMAN VILLA DISCOVERED AT BEDDINGTON, SURREY, APRIL, 1871.

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“ 1. Commodus (second brass). Extremely corroded.

“ 2. Constantine period.

Obv. Head to the right, of Rome or Constantinople.

Rev. Victory.

“ 3. Constantine period. Constantius? (much worn).

“ It was apparent that we were on the site of Roman remains, and it was therefore determined to use every effort to prosecute the excavation. The walls cut through were evidently Roman, and valuable advice was given by E. L. Brock, Esq., who kindly visited the site. He gave his opinion that a Roman villa was about to be uncovered, and suggested that more extensive excavations should be made.

“ The site of these remains, and the surface of the ground for several hundred feet around, is considerably higher than that of the surrounding farm, the general character of which is that of a deposit of drift gravel, covered with surface mould, varying in depth from nine inches to two feet.

“ The walls of the house are about two feet below the surface, and the portions that have escaped the ravages of time stand from a height of six inches to twenty-one inches from the foundation. No artificial foundation was visible beneath the walls, which are placed upon the natural gravel-bed. The walls are composed of large flints and flat Roman bricks set in mortar. The bricks are from one and a half to two and a half inches in thickness, and ten inches square. The exterior walls are built solely of flints and mortar. The buildings extend east and west from the larger central chamber, the walls of which are more regular and thicker than any of the others; and probably this was the principal apartment of the building.

“ The internal dimensions of this chamber are sixteen feet by ten feet. At the north-western extremity there is an opening into a semicircular structure of about three feet six inches radius; at the mouth of this recess are two piers or buttresses, which project forward from the interior line of walls ten inches. In this recess there were the remains of the columns of the hypocaust. A similar recess, only larger, was found at Uriconium: this, it may be remarked, was also on the northern side of the chamber.

“ At the north-eastern corner of the central chamber is a rectangular apartment annexed to, but apparently having no opening into it, at least at the level of the existing remains. This chamber conclusively shows that a hypocaust existed in this as in other Roman dwellings. It was most carefully excavated, and the supports for the floor above were clearly exposed. These supports are built up of the common Roman tiles, of red earthenware, varying in size from eight inches to eleven, square, and one and a half inches thick, which were laid in mortar. They were built here to the height of twelve inches from the foundation of the walls. The thickness of the exterior walls of this apartment is fifteen inches.

“ Immediately east of the central chamber, and at a distance from it of seven feet, is a building entirely detached, and unconnected by any wall with the main part of the villa. This building was unfortunately

cut through by the workmen. It was more perfect than any other portion; perhaps its separation from the main building had preserved it from destruction. This chamber is ten feet in length by six feet in breadth. The western wall is of unusual thickness, being two feet three inches, the other walls being from eighteen to twenty-one inches across. The flooring is composed of red tiles, nine inches square, laid regularly in mortar to a depth of twelve inches. The interior walls are coated with a coarse plaster, composed of lime and powdered burnt clay, which presents the same appearance as the mortar beneath the tiles.

“A series of outer and partition walls, of a much rougher construction, and less easily defined, are attached to the western part of the large chamber. Their relation was ascertained by careful examination. From all appearances, it is conjectured that they were offices attached to the dwelling. South of the thick wall abutting on the large chamber, a portion of pavement, five feet by one foot nine inches, composed of square tiles, appears to have been subjected to great heat whilst in its present position. They were found to be fragile when attempted to be removed, and had a dark appearance, as though they were calcined. Probably this was where the fire of the hypocaust was made.

“Nothing like a tessellated pavement was met with, and from all appearances it was doubtless a dwelling of but moderate pretensions.

“Large quantities of fragments of plaster from the walls were found in and around the building. They are of a white ground, marked with bands of various widths, from a quarter of an inch to two inches. The stripes are principally of a crimson colour, but pieces having sepia and pink stripes were picked up, and some fragments had traces of a yellow pigment. Corner pieces coloured red were also found, showing the angles where the lines joined. These fragments of plaster are formed of lime mixed with small pieces of bricks and flint. It is interesting to note that the colour on these fragments is apparently as fresh as if painted recently, although they have been subjected to the action of air and moisture for so many hundred years.

“Large quantities of portions of the flue tiles were found in the interior of the larger chamber, some retaining the traces of fire very distinctly: they are scored in various patterns.

“The space within the walls was a mass of *débris*, composed of made earth, soot, fragments of brick, tiles, pottery, and plaster from the walls.

“The pieces of pottery were of various kinds: several pieces of Samian ware were met with, and others of a peculiar red ware, ornamented by the impression of a small marine shell on the still moist clay.

“Two pieces, supposed to be Castor ware, are of a chocolate colour, embossed with white ornaments.

“A bronze bead, about half an inch in diameter, was found in the interior of the large chamber. Two coins only were found in removing the earth from the buildings.

“1. Constantine period.

Obv. Head of Rome, URBS ROMA.

Rev. Romulus and Remus. Mint mark TR.

"2. A Saxon silver penny.¹

Obv. ✠ ÆDELSTAN REX TO BR. Seven small pellets forming a rose.

Rev. ✠ EADMUND MO LEIGCE. Nine similar pellets.

"Many oyster-shells and snail-shells were found amongst the *débris*, also the skull and bones of a dog, the lower jaw of an ox, or of some other large animal, with many bones of smaller animals and birds. A roof-tile, deeply indented with the impress of the foot of an animal, probably that of a sheep, was taken from the walls of the building.

"A lump of mortar of the well-known Roman type was discerned by the writer at another spot on the farm, and upon excavation being made underneath, the foundation of a building, apparently about twenty feet square, was met with, accompanied with many fragments of large vessels or amphoræ, but nothing worthy of note in addition. These remains were so little attractive that no extensive search was made.

"A coin of Claudius II. ? was picked up adjoining this building.

"Two other coins were picked up in separate places on the farm.

"1. Allectus.

Obv. ALLECTVS. Head of Allectus to left.

Rev. LAETITIA AUG. . Galley.

Mint mark, probably indicating that it was struck at Colchester.

"2. A coin of Carausius?"

Mr. Addy having thus preserved a careful record of these discoveries, it was found indispensable to continue the irrigation works, and these interesting remains are now effectually hidden from sight.

¹ The obverse of this coin agrees precisely with that figured in Ruding's *Annals of the Coinage*, Pl. 17, No. 19, except that in that specimen there are eight and not seven pellets. The moneyer Eadmund occurs on a coin of different type, *ibid.*, Appendix, Pl. 28 (Æthelstan No. 2), and the contraction LEIGCE for Leicester on other pieces.