

ROMAN VILLA, DISCOVERED AT BISLEY,  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE,

BY THOMAS BAKER, ESQ., OF WATERCOMBE HOUSE.

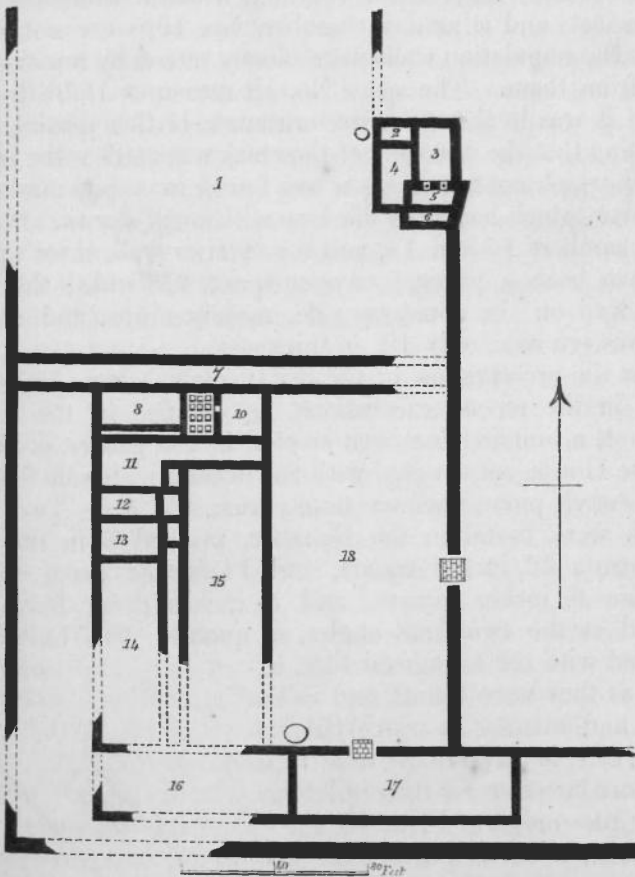
IN a field called the Church piece, near Lilly-Horn, adjoining the highway from Oakridge Common to Bisley, near Lilly Gate, the vestiges of a Roman structure of considerable extent have been brought to light. The land belongs to Frampton's place in the parish of Bisley, in the county of Gloucester, and is the property of Mr. Thomas Baker, of Watercombe House. The excavations, commenced under his direction, had not proceeded far, before an extensive range of chambers was exposed to view, the communications of which one with another were distinctly marked, and in some places were to be seen the supports and bases of tessellated floors, although no fragments of the tesserae were found. These chambers were bounded on one side by a wall of great thickness, but the limits of the whole villa have not yet been ascertained. The bricks used in this construction were mostly from seven to ten inches square, and one inch in thickness; the greater part of them were marked in Roman capitals TPFA, impressed on the surface. Hexagonal tiles, in which were found inserted the iron nails by which they had been fastened, oyster shells in abundance, fragments of red and coloured glazed pottery, ornamented with a variety of figures, portions of glass, many little implements of brass, such as tweezers, &c., the root of a stag's horn, of unusually large size, sawed off at the ends, a quantity of bones of stags, sheep, and other animals, two knives, part of an adze, and other articles, have been found; one of the knives had a blade of somewhat remarkable fashion, measuring 5 in. in length, 2 in. broad at the haft, and gradually tapering to the point.

At the south-west angle of the space numbered 18 in the plan, at the spot marked by a circle, there was found, not more than six inches below the surface, a round earthen pot, which contained a globular mass of metal; this mass was found to consist of a conglomerate of coins, to the number of 1,223. Some of these have been preserved in the state of cohesion in which they were found, and the whole form nearly a complete series of second and third brass, mostly in the best preservation, from the reigns of Valerian to Diocletian inclusively, comprehending the usurpers in Britain, or elsewhere, who are not usually reckoned in the imperial list.

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	A.D.	Coins.		A.D.	Coins.
Valerianus, died ..	267	2	Tacitus, died . . . .	276	35
Postumus . . . . .	267	19	Florianus . . . . .	276	2
Marius . . . . .	268	5	Carus . . . . .	283	1
Gallienus . . . . .	268	29	Numerianus . . . . .	284	2
Salonina . . . . .	268	5	Carinus . . . . .	285	1
Victorinus . . . . .	268	353	Carausius . . . . .	294	7
Quintillus . . . . .	270	6	Allectus . . . . .	297	1
Claudius . . . . .	270	34	Maximian . . . . .	310	2
Probus . . . . .	272	73	Diocletian . . . . .	313	6
Tetricus . . . . .	273	629			
Aurelianus . . . . .	275	9			1223
Severina . . . . .	275	2			

The subjoined plan exhibits the position of the various chambers which have been discovered.

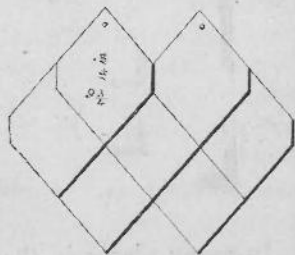


In many places in the part of the field marked 1, foundation walls have been found, about six or eight inches below

the surface, on sounding the ground with an iron bar. The following are the measurements of the various chambers: No. 2, 6ft. 9in., by 13ft.; No. 3, 24ft. 6in., by 13ft.; No. 4, 24ft. 6in., by 13ft.; No. 5, 6ft. 9in., by 15ft. 6in.; No. 6, 2ft. 6in., by 16ft. 6in. The long passage, No. 7, measures about 7ft. in width; No. 8, 15ft., by 38ft. The adjoining chamber, which measures 18ft. 6in., by 12ft., appears to have been a hypocaust, the fireplace being on the eastern side, as marked on the plan. No. 10, 18ft. 6in., by 19ft.; No. 11, 19ft. 6in., by 29ft. 6in., with a narrow space or passage running from it eastward, measuring in width 8ft. 6in.; No. 12, 9ft. by 26ft. 6in.; No. 13, 15ft. by 28ft. 3in. All the rooms in this part of the building, with the exception of the hypocaust, and adjoining chamber, No. 10, were not cleared out; the foundation walls were merely traced by removing the soil from them. The space No. 18 measures 153ft. by 77ft. 6in. It was in the south-western angle of this portion of the building that the discovery of the coins was made; the earthen vessel which contained them was found in a pit, marked on the plan, which had been filled up with small stones. Between the chambers 16 and 17, and the exterior wall, there appears to have been a passage, or open space, 9ft. wide; the boundary wall on the southern side, measures 5ft., and that on the western side, only 4ft. in thickness.

For the preservation of the remains which were brought to light in the recent excavations, as detailed in the present account, a building has been erected in the garden of Watercombe House, constructed with the Roman materials found in the Church piece, such as stone, brick, tile, &c. Two bases which were found in the chamber, marked 3 in the plan, measuring 22 inches square, and 14 inches deep, with a mortise 6 inches square, and 4 inches deep, have been placed at the two front angles, as quoins. The building is covered with the hexagonal tiles, exactly as they were found, and in the form and manner in which the Romans, as it is conjectured, used them to form a covering for their buildings. These tiles measure 14 in. by  $9\frac{1}{2}$ .

Lewis, in his Topographical Dictionary, mentions that at Lilly House, near the town of Bisley, a vaulted chamber was discovered, with several apartments, having



tesselated pavements, and niches in the walls. Some other relics of antiquity, supposed to be Roman, have also been found at Custom Scrubs, another adjacent hamlet. These relics of Roman times were in the possession of Sir Paul Baghott, at the Manor House, Lyppiatt, and are now at Watercombe House. Fosbroke mentions, that at Custom Scrubs, in the parish of Bisley, a votive bas relief was discovered, bearing the inscription MARTI OLLUDIO; and also other Roman antiquities, which are preserved at the Manor House; drawings of them were made by Samuel Lysons. These Roman antiquities were found in the course of excavations which were made in the year 1802.

On September 14th, 1844, whilst the labourers employed in the railway works were digging at the mouth of Sapperton tunnel, they found a human skeleton imbedded in the earth at a depth of about 15 inches, and by its side were discovered seventy Roman coins. The spot is about a mile from a place called the Lark's Bush, in the hamlet of Frampton, where a large quantity of Roman coins have been found. Thirty-six of the seventy coins were obtained by Mr. Baker; they consist of the coins of the following emperors: Gallienus, Victorinus, Tetricus senior, Quintillus, Carausius, and Allectus, and the Empress Salonina.