A ROMAN VILLA NEAR HENLEY.

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It will perhaps be not without interest to record the first discovery, so far as I know, of Roman remains in the immediate neighbourhood of Henley, on the west edge of Harpsden Wood, immediately adjoining the sixteenth hole of the Henley golf links. I owe the knowledge of the fact to the kindness of my cousin, Mr. Maxwell Maberly-Smith, in whose property the remains were discovered. The plan (fig. 1) is also his work.

The construction is of flints set in mortar: in one case only, in the east wall of the hypocaust (no. 2 on the plan), is a course of flanged tiles laid flat introduced. The walls average two feet in width, but the flint, gravel and mortar foundations on which they rested, which are in many cases alone preserved, are often considerably wider, running up to as much as four feet.

The building discovered appears to be a portion of a larger edifice, the main part of which lay to the south or west, under the ground now occupied by the golf links; and it apparently consisted of a set of baths, with some foundations of uncertain character to the south of them. The group before us consists of six different rooms or spaces. On the north is a hypocaust, stoked from the west. The entrance to the stokehole (1) was between the two piers or masses of foundation, aa, and from these the ground level sloped gradually to the level of the floor under the hypocaust (2), the pilae of which must have been about 2 feet 9 inches high (minus the thickness of the floor they had to carry), if the floor level above them was uniform with that of the rest of the building. The floor was probably not of mosaic, as no tesserae have been found. The wall on the north was of considerable thickness, but much ruined, and interrupted at one point.

The hypocaust had pilae of tiles, the base tiles averaging
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eleven inches, and the upper eight inches square. The space under them is almost entirely paved with similar tiles, measuring sixteen by eleven inches each.

In the apse (plate 1) there must have been a bath, approached by steps down from the rectangular part of the room, for here there are no pilae, but only box tiles, each 1 foot 6 inches long, 10 inches wide, and 5 inches across, laid on edge, with tiles 1 foot 4 inches by 11 inches laid on them, which must have carried the floor. These tiles are only a foot above the level of the tile floor under the pilae of the hypocaust. There are no traces of box tiles running up the walls, nor of the slits in which they could have been placed, so that it is not apparent how a draught was created. That we have to do with a hypocaust, however, is clear from the considerable traces of soot which were discovered: and we may add that in two places there are box tiles laid horizontally (now broken) which may have been the commencement of the uptake. The east and south walls of the hypocaust have at the base a cavetto rendered in hard cement.

The next room to the east (no. 3 on the plan), on the other hand, though its floor was supported by pilae, was not a hypocaust at all. The pilae rest upon a mortar bedding, and are constructed like the others, though in the north-east and north-west angles they are supplemented by tiles laid across the corners, while on the south side there is a mass of walling. But, assuming the floor-level of the rest of the building to have been maintained, they could only have risen to a height of one foot or one foot six inches at the very most, which is too little for a hypocaust: and besides, there is no trace of any aperture in the walls by which hot air could have been introduced from the hypocaust proper, nor of any separate opening for stoking. We must therefore, it seems, regard the arrangement as a device for keeping the floor dry, a method by no means unknown in Romano-British buildings.

Outside (3) on the north, is a small depression, roughly circular, four to five feet in diameter, and (at present) two feet in depth, puddled with clay, which must have been intended as a receptacle for water. It was full of tiles, fragments of painted wall plaster, and animals' bones.

To the south of the range of rooms just described
is another, the floors of which were only a few inches below the level of the ground.

In the westernmost of these (4) the northern wall, dividing it from the stokehole, could not be traced with certainty; the north-west angle of room (5) is clearly defined, and no wall seemed to start from it in a westerly direction. On the other hand, the existence of a hard floor at the upper level, three inches in thickness, composed of fragments of chalk, pebbles and clay, seems to render it necessary to suppose the existence of such a wall, which, like the walls on the north side of the stokehole, may well have been pulled out in later days.
The next room (5) was not accessible from (4) except by a slight step up of an inch or two over the wall between them; but as (5) must have served as the approach to (2), and (3) was perhaps not connected with (2) (though this is quite uncertain) it would seem not unlikely that (4) and (5) were united, and formed the corridor by which the bath was reached. The floor of (5) was similar to that of (4) but contained mortar also, and showed considerable traces of burning.

At the east end of (5) is the small space (6) separated off by a partly ruined cross-wall. It appears to have been reconstructed slightly further west than the old wall, which was suppressed, but of the newer wall only the southern portion is preserved. The room or space looks as though it had been a small water tank, having a floor and sides of hard red cement 1½ inches thick: the floor rests on a bedding of mortar about eight inches thick. In the south wall two (originally there were three) box tiles with scored backs have been built in, with what object it is not altogether apparent: they lie horizontally, and slope slightly downwards, ending against the cross-wall between (5) and (6).

To the south the west wall of room (5) is prolonged as far as the limit of Mr. Maberly Smith's property; 4½ feet from the south side of room (5) there is a doorway in it 4 feet 7 inches in width, and then the wall continues, its foundation only being in part preserved, without a break and without a cross-wall for some 50 feet.

On the east side of it a hard cement flooring can be traced for a width of about 7 feet, starting from the south wall of room (5), on a level with it as preserved, and marking, no doubt, the place of the entrance into this room. The floor can be traced (though it is a good deal softer) for some way southwards,¹ but gradually dies away: and soon afterwards the ancient ground level sinks very considerably; a pit at A, sunk through loose flints and loose filling, only reached the untouched gravel bottom at 9 feet down. Some few fragments of Roman pottery and tiles were found, and, nearly 6 feet down, a third brass of gray ware was found, the gravel being reached at a depth of 9 inches.

¹ A hole was made through it some 8 feet from the south wall of room (5), but only one fragment of a pot of ordinary
APSE OF HYPOCAUST.

PLATE I.
Claudius Gothicus. The nature and extent of this pit have not been ascertained.

On the west side of the wall a floor of chalk and pebbles at the same level as elsewhere may be traced as shown in the plan, and at the point marked B is a rectangular foundation of mortar and gravel 4 feet by 6 feet, having, one would imagine, some connexion with the large mass at the western extremity of the south wall of room (4).

The north wall of rooms (1) (2) and (3) can be traced westwards for some way, but for the greater part only as a wide gravel foundation; after 18 feet it has a bulge southwards. About 8 feet to the south of this is a roughly square foundation, and about 10 feet further on another, so that possibly there was a line of pillars or columns here. Shortly after the bulge the wall going westwards slopes abruptly: but the ground slopes away here, so that its continuation has probably perished.

The objects found in the villa have been carefully preserved, but do not point to its having been inhabited by people of great wealth, and all testify to its occupation in the latter part of the third and the early part of the fourth centuries. Besides the coin of Claudius Gothicus already mentioned, the following have been discovered, all at a slight depth below the modern ground level.

Tetricus Junior: two third brasses, kindly identified by Mr. G. F. Hill: the type is uncertain, as the coins are much worn.

Carausius: third brass. Cohen, 123. Obv. IMP. CARAVSIVS. P. AV. Draped bust with spiked crown to right. Rev. LAETITIA AVG. Female figure standing to left, holding a garland and an anchor.

Constantius Chlorus: second brass (a fine specimen) Cohen, 199. Obv. FL. VAL. CONSTANTIVS NOBIL. CAES. Bust with laurel crown, wearing cuirass, to right. Rev. MONETA S(acra) AVG. ET. CAESS. NN. Female figure standing to left, holding a balance and a cornucopiae. (mint of Trier).


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1 Cohen, 230. Obv. IMP. C. CLAVDIVS AVG. Bust with spiked crown to right. Rev. PROVIDENT. AVG. Providence standing to left, pointing with a rod to a globe on the ground, holding a cornucopiae and leaning on a column.
to right. Rev. BEATA TRANOVILLITAS. Altar: on it VOTIS XX. Exergue PTR (mint of Trier).

We thus have a range of date from 267 to 326 A.D. (Constantine celebrated his vicennalia in Rome in 326.)

The pottery is of the ordinary type: there is no "Samian," but two or three pieces of "false Samian" are present. The finer Romano-British wares are almost entirely absent: with the scanty fragments of gray pottery discovered in the pit there was found at about 7 feet down a bit of dull red ware with a spiral in white painted upon it. The great majority of the fragments are of dark gray ware, and belong to pear-shaped pots (some with rims decorated with notches or thumb marks) and bowls with or without profiled rims.

The bones include those of pig, horse, cow, goat and sheep. There are also many oyster-shells and one (fresh-water?) mussel.

Of the numerous flange-tiles three have undecipherable and fragmentary graffiti. No stone tiles were found.

The pieces of wall-plaster in the clay-lined cistern or tank were the only examples found. They show red and green lines, surrounding a white field with decorations in red and yellow, and resemble some of the contemporary decorations found at Caerwent. There is also a piece of flower pattern, resembling some from House no. vii at Caerwent, in mauve and purple.

Among the most curious objects discovered was a much patched piece of copper, measuring 6 by 5 inches, found near the southern end of the long wall.

No fibulae or pins were found, and this is attributable, either to the fact that nothing of the building is preserved above floor level, or to its not having been suddenly destroyed, so that the inhabitants were able to remove their possessions at leisure.