A NOTE ON THE TESSELLATED PAVEMENTS FOUND AT MEDBOURNE, LEICESTERSHIRE, AND IN BROAD STREET, LONDON.

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The published statements regarding the two important Romano-British tessellated pavements found at Medbourne, Leicestershire, and in Broad Street, London, are in some respects misleading, so it may be as well to put on record some inquiries lately made, in order that other workers may be saved from a futile search for the now lost pavements.

PAVEMENT FROM MEDBOURNE, LEICESTERSHIRE.

The Victoria History of the County of Leicester, i, 214, mentions the discovery of a pavement at Medbourne in 1721, which was reopened in 1793, and again in 1877, "when the tesserae were removed to South Kensington Museum." These last words are no doubt gathered from statements to the same effect published in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London, 2nd series, vii, 197, The Transactions of the Leicester Archaeological Society, v, 171, and The Reports of the Associated Architectural Societies, xiv, p. lxii. The last named journal says distinctly that "The tesserae are removed and are now deposited in South Kensington Museum, having been placed there by Mr. Frederick Peake, and will be reset there." Enquiries at the museum elicited the fact that no pavement from Medbourne is preserved there; but the authorities very kindly searched and discovered some correspondence carried on in 1877 with Mr. Frederick Peake which ended with a request that the pavement might be sent to the museum; but there is no record of it ever having been sent.

Mr. Frederick Peake died in 1906 and his son Mr. Ronald Peake most kindly searched his father's papers for any record of the pavement, but with little success.
One paper was however found, a copy of a letter dated 14th April, 1877, addressed to the editor of The Times, but either never sent or not accepted. With regard to the fate of the pavement little or nothing is known. A box containing a mass of dust and tesserae seems to have been found in Mr. Frederick Peake's office after his death; but as there was no label attached to show its origin it was consigned to the dust-bin. It is impossible to say definitely whether this formed part

1 By Mr. Ronald Peake's consent the letter is here printed:

Ashtead, Surrey,
14th April, 1877.
To the Editor, The Times.
Sir,

It may interest your readers to have a short account of some beautiful Roman tessellated pavement which has recently been discovered in the village of Medbourne, near Market Harborough, Leicestershire. It was found in a small paddock in the village within a short distance of a stream. It lay due north and south, at a depth of from 3 to 4 feet below the present surface of the ground. The materials of which it is composed, and the colours are respectively, whinstone (blue), brick (red), oolithic stone from the locality (drab), and a composition (white). The size of the blocks average half an inch square; those, however, on the exterior of the pattern are one inch square, the whole being set on a bed of mortar upwards of an inch thick, which in its turn appears to have rested on the native earth.

The pattern is extremely beautiful and elegant; the size over all in its original integrity was 42 by 22 feet. It is difficult to conjecture the exact age of this very exquisite piece of work, but from the fact that Roman coins of very early dates, many of which are in my possession, have been found in the immediate locality, it is probably of an age dating back nearly to the time of Christ. In addition to much symbolism, some of the oldest rules of practical geometry are embodied in the pattern and the chief one, found also in the great Pyramid of Gizeh, is that if the base of a right-angled triangle be 3 units and the height 4 units, the hypotenuse will be 5 units.

Fragments of pavement have from time to time been found in a garden adjoining the paddock referred to, and this fact led to a careful examination being made recently in thecroft, previously to its being converted to building purposes.

As soon as the existence of the pavement had been discovered the whole was laid bare, and by dint of considerable ingenuity on the part of the engineers of the staff of the London and North Western Railway, who rendered invaluable assistance in measuring and photographing the design, the entire pavement has been successfully reproduced and the pavement itself so far as it remained has been carefully removed and preserved.

The pavement evidently formed the atrium or entrance hall of a Roman villa or bath. Medbourne was the site of a Roman station, probably of considerable importance, and the present name is no doubt the remnant of the Roman Midianbury, so called from being midway between the great camp of Camulodunum (Colchester), and Deva Castra or Colonia (Chester), being about 90 miles from either. The traces of a grand military road which connected these two places, in a nearly perfectly straight line, are still remarkably distinct, and this road, the Via Devana, signifying the road to Deva Colonia, the city of the Dee, may yet be travelled on for many miles, although for the greater part being long since disused as a public road. On this important highway stand Cambridge, Huntingdon, Leicester, Burton-on-Trent, Uttoxeter, Newcastle-under-Lyne, etc.

Numerous fragments of cinerary urns, portions of amphorae, samian ware, and wall frescoes have also been found, but owing to the evident destruction of the Roman town or station by fire, and the subsequent removal of the stones for building purposes, during the long middle ages (as to which the village of Medbourne tells its own tale), all the more conspicuous features of the Roman station are totally obliterated.

Fred Peake.
of the Medbourne pavement; but it appears certain that this fine pavement has not been preserved, and that the only record now available is the illustrations contained in the books cited above.

**PAVEMENT FROM THE EXCISE OFFICE, BROAD STREET, LONDON.**

Mr. J. E. Price in his *Description of the Roman Tessellated Pavement found in Bucklersbury*, states at page 24 that the pavement which was found in 1854 on the site of the old Excise Office in Broad Street was removed to and preserved at the Crystal Palace, Sydenham, and “though not open to public inspection may doubtless be seen on proper application.” On application to the general manager of the Crystal Palace in June of this year asking if he had any record of the pavement or if any part of it existed at the present time, he most courteously replied that “The curator of the Fine Art Department reports that there was a quantity of pavement under the floor of the Crystal Palace which was discovered in excavating some part of London Wall and should think it was about 9 or 10 feet square; but imperfect as regards design.” As no record exists of any other pavement having been placed in the Crystal Palace, it may be inferred that the curator has mistaken the locality from which the pavement came and that the one from the old Excise Office is the one in question. It may however be gathered from this report that the pavement no longer exists. Fortunately coloured drawings and engravings are in existence showing what a magnificent example it was.