

ROMAN REMAINS

IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF
HURST-PIER-POINT AND DANNY.

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IT has long been known that the neighbourhood of Hurst-Pier-Point abounds with Roman relics; and many an explorer of that district has been well repaid for his researches. This is particularly the case with that ridge on which the village, or rather let us call it the flourishing little town of Hurst is placed, and along which the high road passes, leading from Stone Pound to Albourne; where, at different times, quantities of coins, implements, and various specimens of Roman pottery have come to light. And this is just the spot where they might naturally be expected. It is well known that the Romans were accustomed from very early times to bury their dead outside the walls of their towns, a necessity to which Englishmen have only within a very few years awakened; and the sides of their high roads were usually selected for that purpose. There is good reason to believe that a track from east to west, through the forest, extended along the somewhat elevated ground on which Hurst-Pier-Point stands, and that it was much used by the Romans. It probably commenced at or near Stone Pound, where it crossed the road which led from Portus Adurni (Portslade) by Clayton, stretching northward through the Weald.

The following are some of the localities in which not only Roman, but other earlier relics have been found. To my friend the Rev. Edward Turner, I am indebted for the following account of what has been discovered upon the Ham Farm, which lies on the south side of the turnpike road. "Immediately behind the farm house there is a very large mound of earth, bearing strong evidence of being artificial, and which I have always looked upon as of Roman origin, and sepulchral. Nothing, however, had been found to substantiate this conjecture, until about six years ago, when the then tenant, a kinsman of mine, engaged in enlarging a farm

yard adjacent to it, found it necessary to cut away a part of this mound, and in doing so, he discovered an urn in a perfect state, and fragments of others; around, there were lying many bones and teeth of animals, both large and small. The urn was given to the late Mr. Auckland, of Lewes. Part of a quern was also found near the spot, and a piece of sandstone perforated with holes, which had been evidently drilled through by some sharp instrument, for what purpose it would be difficult to guess. Another interesting discovery made in the course of the improvements carried on upon this farm, was that of an ancient road. In draining the meadows to the north of the house, the workmen were obstructed in several places by a bed of concrete, about three feet thick, and from thirty to forty feet in width. This they were obliged to cut through, a work of no ordinary labour, consisting as it did of a foundation of stones and large chalk, upon which was placed a layer of unbroken flints, and upon this a bed of sea beach, mixed with small chalk to give it firmness, to form the crust of the road. The solidity of this mass of materials was very great.¹ This ancient road was about twenty inches below the surface, and was traced across two of the meadows."

"This discovery clears up a very important point connected with the Roman Via, which is well known to have run north and south through the county for the purpose of connecting the Portus Adurni of the Romans at Aldrington, with the Ermyrn Street from London to Dover. That from this Portus it first passed through Portslade and Hangleton, there can be no doubt, Portslade taking its name from this circumstance, but after leaving Hangleton all traces of it are lost, until you get to St. John's Common, where they are again perceptible, and are occasionally met with from thence through Ardingly and onwards through Surrey, until it reaches Bromley in Kent, where it joins the Ermyrn Street (see *Sussex Archæol. Collections*, Vol. II, p. 76). Between Hangleton and St. John's Common, the direction taken by this road has been involved in much uncertainty, some thinking that it bore away towards Clayton Hill, where it descended the chalk downs, and followed the line of the present Brighton and Cuckfield turnpike road to St. John's

¹ There was no sham in the works of the Romans; what they did they did thoroughly well. There was no veneration in their carpentry.

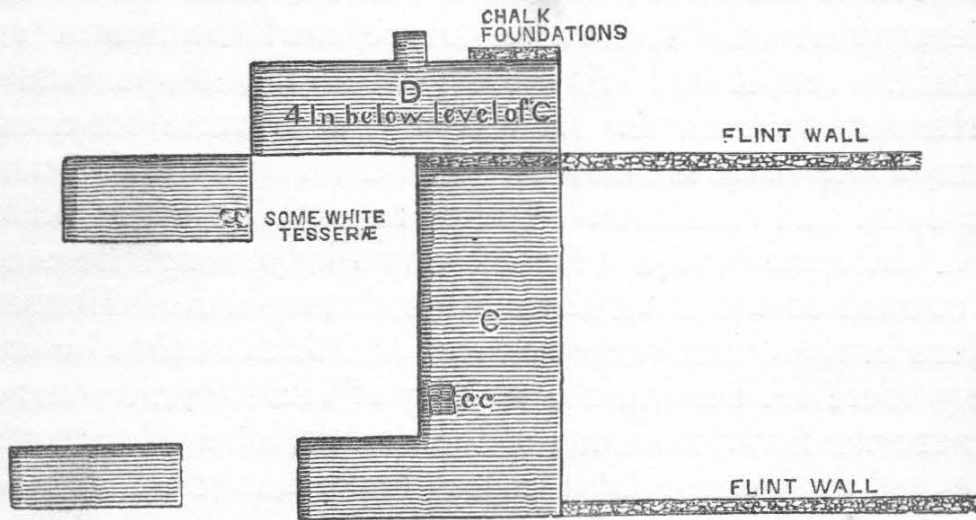
Common; whilst others thought that from Hangleton it took the direction of the Devil's Dyke, descending the hills at Saddlescombe. The pointing of the road across the Ham Farm, which was from north-east to south-west, plainly shews that those who held the Devil's Dyke direction were right, for that this road discovered on the Ham Farm was a portion of Portus Adurni Via, is unquestionable. From Saddlescombe it must have run somewhere near to Danny, and consequently close to the Roman Villa lately discovered there. Nor is this the only Roman building found in this neighbourhood. In the grounds in front of Clayton Parsonage there are the remains of a Roman bath, which were opened about half a century ago, and again covered up. From the banks on each side of the road between Clayton church and the parsonage I have frequently taken fragments of Romano-British pottery."

To mention other localities which have given up their Roman relics;—Many a Roman coin, both of silver and brass, and urns perfect and broken, and fragments of iron and brass instruments have been turned up at the Cross Ways Sandpit. Urns and Paturæ have been found at Wickham; and in the village of Hurst, particularly in the churchyard, so many coins and so large a quantity of pottery has been at various times unearthed, as to give rise to the conjecture that it may have been the site of a Roman Temple. The fact is that the whole district there is rife, not only with relics of the Romans, but with the vestiges of earlier and later races; for the British and Saxon people were also dwellers on our Downs and in our Weald. About two miles southward of Hurst is that bold projection of the Downs, called Wolstanbury,² where there is a circular encampment about a furlong in diameter, like Chanctonbury and Mount Caburn; it was probably originally British, and subsequently occupied by the Romans and Saxons; and here have been found celts of flint and bronze, Roman coins, knives, and the handles of swords, portions of armour, shattered shields and broken spurs, memorials of those fighting men of various races who have been at different times the rough occupants of our beautiful county.

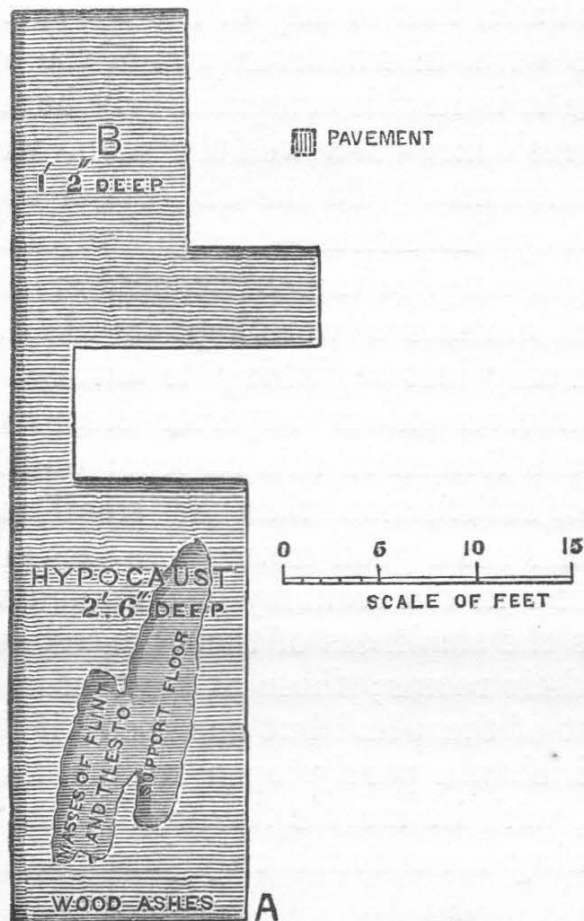
It was in the autumn of 1857 that some labourers engaged in draining a meadow about a quarter of a mile to the north-

² See the article on Sussex in the *Quarterly Review* for July.

west of Danny, about half way between the villages of Hurst and Wolstanbury, struck with their pick-axes against the walls and the tessellated pavement of a Roman Villa, of which the following is a plan.



GRASS



As this building has been fully described in the tenth volume of Collections, p. 210, and a reference to the ground plan on the preceding page gives the best notion of its size and character, it is not necessary to enlarge upon it here.

The site of the villa was well chosen, for placed as it was on elevated ground the views to the north and west are beautiful. It had been often observed that the spot was a favorite resort for cattle. It was dry and warm in consequence of the cavities below it, and here they naturally came to lie down and ruminate. There are probably other buildings of the same kind not far off, very likely along the sides of that road on the Ham Farm alluded to before. If those who are interested in such matters (and fortunately for our society there are such in the vicinity of Hurst) will observe what are the favorite haunts of their cattle, it may lead to the discovery of other Villas more important than this of Danny.

The ruins of this building were not more than a foot below the surface of the ground; and the first portion intruded upon by the pick-axe was the hypocaust or fire-place and the bath, that luxury of life which the Roman could not dispense with, in whatever part of the world his lot was cast, and here it is in this comparatively humble place, not probably the residence of a wealthy man, with all its necessary accompaniments. To the delights of the vapour bath, with its sanatory influences—the sudatorium, to say nothing of the strigil, Anglice the curricomb, or the unctorium, where perfumed ointments were kept in alabaster boxes, Englishmen are only just beginning to awake, so far are we, who pride ourselves on our superior cleanliness and refinement, behind the Roman in this respect; and let it be said, with a feeling of satisfaction, that the small metropolis of Sussex, Lewes, has set a good example in this sanatory course.

Nothing in the economy of a Roman villa surprises us so much as the smallness of their houses, and the very limited size of their rooms; those at least of a domestic character. The best of them had but one room, if that can be called a room which was partly open to the heavens above it—the Atrium, with its marble fountain in the middle—of any size. The dining room could only just hold the triclinium with

its three couches for the guests to recline upon; and the bedroom with its cubiculum was certainly not larger; but this is to be accounted for by the difference of their tastes and habits from ours. In fact they lived very little at home. They were early risers, as the inhabitants of hot climates generally are, and they left home to pass the day in their public buildings, their temples, and amphitheatres, and the porticoes of their Basilicæ; these indeed were spacious and magnificent; and they came home for a short repose during the heat of the day and to sleep at night. This was a simpler process with the Roman than it is with us. They wanted no canopy over their heads, supported by four posts, and no stifling curtains, to shut out the wholesome air of heaven.

In the detail of the Roman discoveries I have been much assisted by my friends, the Rev. Edward Turner and Mr. Figg. To the latter I am also indebted for the ground plan of the villa.
