

FURTHER DISCOVERIES AT THE ROMAN BATHS IN BATH, AND THE PROBABLE DATE OF THEIR FIRST FORMATION.

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At the recent Meeting of the Archæological Institute, at Norwich, I exhibited plans on a large scale, and also a perspective drawing of the arrangements of the Roman Baths at Bath, a large portion of which have been lately laid open to view, but are now to some extent covered over with recent buildings. I explained the circumstances under which recent discoveries had taken place, and pointed out what had been previously laid open, giving details of what remains had been found in following the course of the ancient Roman drain, which led to the finding of the Great Reservoir that had supplied the Roman baths. Having fully explained the plans and drawing I passed on to the probable date when the erection of these baths took place, inferring from the style of the masonry, and the size of the stones of which the large rectangular bath is constructed, that it might be fixed at an early period of the Roman occupation. The western portion of Britain had been brought under the Roman power in the days of the Emperor Claudius. A pig of lead found on the Mendip hills, at Blagdon, bears the stamp of Britannicus, the adopted son of that Emperor; and other pigs of an early date have been found—as one of the Emperor Vespasian (A.D. 70), before his son Titus was associated with him in the Empire. About this date Sextus Julius Frontinus was made legate of Britain under Vespasian, and succeeded Petilius Cerealis. He is noted by the historian Tacitus as “*Vir Magnus*” (Agric: c, 17). We know from the work that Frontinus has left behind

him in the "Aqueducts of Rome" that he was a man of no mean ability, and well skilled in "water works," having had the oversight of the water supply of the Imperial city. He was also an able military commander, and wrote a work entitled "Stratagemata." How long his government of Britain lasted is uncertain, but he was succeeded by Agricola, who very probably caused the works of collecting the Thermal waters at Aquæ Solis to be carried out on the grand scale, of which the recent discoveries bear witness. The system of the Roman Baths seem to have occupied one side of the Roman Forum, reaching from the site of the present Pump Room as far as the Abbey Church, and extending to a considerable depth south-west. Much more, probably, remains to be discovered, but what has been laid open serves to show the size and completeness of the buildings, and quite justifies the description of Solinus (Polyhistor), who, speaking of Britain, says:—"In quo spatio magna et multa flumina, FONTES CALIDI OPIPARO EXCULTI APPARATU ad usus Mortalium." These baths, then, at the time he wrote his history, must have been well known, and much in use, if we may judge from the remains of dedicatory altars and other offerings found around the hot springs. He mentions, also, that *Minerva* was the presiding goddess, and we find her name, as well as that of "*Sul. Minerva*," inscribed on these altars and votive offerings. At the meeting of the Archæological Institute at Carlisle, in 1882, an account was given of the discoveries up to that time, and a further statement was made at the monthly meeting of the Society in November, 1884, both of which accounts will be found in the published proceedings; but further researches have brought to light another large bath, and have added much to the plan of the whole.

In vol. xlii. p. 11, and following, are given the dimensions of the large rectangular bath, but the one which has been uncovered since, though not so large, is not less interesting, being circular in form, and the platform surrounding it being equally well preserved, and the walls to a certain height. This has unfortunately been built over, the space being required for modern baths, but the Roman work has not been interfered with, and the walls of the original structure are preserved, and can be

distinguished from the modern additions. The buildings which stood above the large rectangular bath have been removed, and the whole of this bath laid open to view. If this could have been the case with the circular bath adjoining, and the whole arrangement seen at one view, it would have been one of the most interesting and instructive sights to be seen in any county.

A smaller bath was also found and a hypocaust. All these have been carefully planned and described, and can be seen under guidance, but the effect of the whole is much lessened by being built over. A detailed account of the discoveries up to last year, will be found in the Handbook of Bath, prepared for the Meeting of the British Association, in 1888.

The portions of sculpture discovered in the course of excavation, are at present arranged on the platform surrounding the large bath, but many fragments of a much later period were found with them.

The dimensions of the hall containing the circular bath is 39ft. 6in. by 35ft. wide. In these two large portions of the Thermal arrangements we probably have the separate baths for males and females, and appended to these appear to have been single baths, more of which may be eventually traced.

It seems from the large masses of roofing, composed of hollow wedged shaped tiles found in the baths, and on the ambulatory surrounding them, that they had been roofed over, or, if the bath itself was left open, the walks around were certainly roofed. The supports which carried the roof remain to a certain height, and appear to have been strengthened at a later period of the Roman occupation.

The sculptured portions discovered of Roman date have been few, but there is one of considerable interest, bearing traces of elegant work, and of a good period of Roman Art, an account of which will be found in the proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries (11th March, 1886). The subject seems to represent Æsculapius and Hygeia, the god of healing and the goddess of health. The male figure is offering a saint or a kid, and between the two figures is a cup, round which is a serpent which may symbolize the health-giving waters. On the back of the stone is a dog and a tree, the dog may symbolize *Caniculus* or the dog

star, emblematic of health, and the whole may have reference to the health and healing derived from the use of the waters. A metal plate was also discovered inscribed with Roman capital letters, and which has been differently read by different authorities; a fac-simile of this will be found in the *Journal of the Archæological Association* for 1886, it is supposed to be a "defixio" or anathema. Many coins were also found, which are at present to be seen in the cases placed in the pump room. These begin with the Emperor Augustus and reach to the reign of Phillipus II.

It is hoped that the Bath Corporation who are the owners of this interesting collection and in whom the property of the mineral water baths is vested, will see to the careful arrangement and classification of these objects, and to their preservation. At present they can hardly be said to be arranged at all, having been placed just as they were discovered under glass cases.

The remains found previous to recent discoveries are lodged in the museum of the Literary and Scientific Institution.

It is much to be regretted that a city like Bath, so rich in Roman remains, should not possess a building entirely dedicated to their preservation, like the museum at York, in the grounds of St. Mary's Abbey.

The discoveries to be made are not yet exhausted, as indications of another bath have been come upon, and only wait further investigation to reveal another portion of these grand Thermal arrangements.

When we reflect that no other city in Britain, and it may, perhaps, be said on the Continent—exclusive of Rome—has yielded such remains of Roman refinement and luxury we may well be proud of these discoveries and labour for their preservation, especially as they give us an idea of the importance of Britain as a province of the Roman Empire, and the estimation in which it was held in Roman times. If the Northumbrian wall, and the walled defences on the east and south coast of Britain, as well as the network of roads in the interior, indicate the value put upon the possession of the island, the remains of refinement and civilization, such as the Roman villas and baths, point to the civilization and physical condition of the people under Roman rule.