

Excavation at Repton.¹

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AT the end of July, Mr. Vassall, of the Priory, Repton, the Bursar of the School, asked me to take charge of an excavation, which might have proved of much importance, and is worthy in its results of brief record. It is proposed very shortly to add to the churchyard a piece of ground known as Alleyne's Close, which lies to the north-west of the parish church. The unevenness of the ground plainly pointed to a former oblong building of some dimensions lying east and west. There was some idea that this might possibly prove to be work pertaining to the old Saxon abbey, and coeval with the celebrated crypt beneath the chancel of the parish church. The use of spade and pick, however, speedily proved the unsoundness of this somewhat rash conjecture. The side walls were found to be about 5 ft. thick, chiefly formed of fair-sized rubble stones, and somewhat confused by fallen fragments where the building had become ruined or treated as a quarry. There can be little doubt that it was an outlying building of the date of the founding of the Norman priory, and most likely it was used as a barn or for other farm purposes. One or two of the stones showed traces of Saxon tooling, and seem to have belonged to some earlier fabric. The only definitely moulded stone uncovered was the chamfered edge of the lowest set-off of a fourteenth-century buttress, *in situ*, at the south-west angle. The Norman building had

¹ The following notes, reprinted from the *Athenæum* of August 17th last, should find a place in this *Journal*.—EDITOR.

evidently been strengthened at that period, and at a like date a kind of porch-like chamber was added at the north-west corner. At the north-east angle there had also been some later additions, and here was found a white plaster flooring, chiefly of gypsum; this was probably of a date soon after the dissolution of the Austin priory. Two days' work sufficed to disclose the remains of the foundations just mentioned, and it did not seem worth while to pursue the investigations further.

Repton, however, is one of the historic sites in the Midlands, and the remains of old pottery, though insignificant in size, were extraordinarily diversified in view of the very limited size of the area investigated. There are but few sites in England which could yield such ethnological evidence of a series of successive human occupations. The fragments, which are now at the Priory,¹ consisted of portions of (1) dark and coarse prehistoric pottery; (2) a piece of pseudo-Samian ware and parts of Roman tiles; (3) bits of early Saxon cinerary urns; (4) later Saxon poorly baked tiling; (5) various fragments of greenish glazed Norman pottery; and (6)² tiles of early mediæval date, with affixing holes for wooden pins, as well as pottery of later dates. A small piece of bronze was also unearthed, which probably pertained to an Anglo-Saxon leathern shield. I believe I am right in saying that distinct evidence of Roman occupation of the site of Repton Abbey and the subsequent Priory has hitherto been lacking, but the bit of pseudo-Samian is beyond cavil.

Repton is, I believe, almost the only public school where surveying is included in the course of instruction. These limited excavations were materially served by the thoroughly mapped out survey of the levels of the site by Mr. Topham's pupils; they also marked out the exact sites of the uncovered foundations before the holes were filled up.

¹ Mr. Vassall will kindly allow any member who wishes to see them to call at the Priory.

² See page 249.