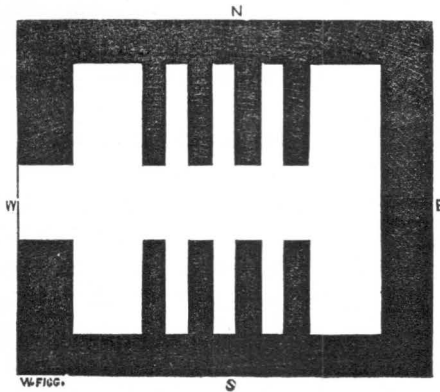


ON THE REMAINS OF A ROMAN BUILDING,

DISCOVERED AT WISTON IN 1848.

BY MR. WILLIAM FIGG.



GROUND PLAN OF REMAINS.

IN the month of January, 1848, some labourers, employed in draining a field belonging to C. Goring, Esq., in the occupation of Mr. Haines, and lying a short distance north-east of the rectory-house at Wiston, discovered, at about two feet beneath the surface, the remains of a building, constructed entirely of Roman tiles, and, judging from the form of the structure, it seems to have been a hypocaust for warming the floor of a room; but unlike similar remains found in this county, at Bignor in 1811, at Duncton in 1812, and lately in London, in making the excavations for the new Coal Exchange, the supports for the floor in this case are not square isolated piers, but solid walls, $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches, or the width of a tile in thickness, with spaces or flues to allow the heated air to come in contact with the underside of the floor, except on the east and west sides, where the flues were about 3 feet wide, with a passage along the centre 3 feet 4 inches in width. The size of the room within the outer walls was about 12 feet by 12 feet 6 inches, and the walls on the north and south were

2 feet, while those on the east and west were 3 feet in thickness. The narrow supporting walls were, when perfect, about 12 to 15 inches in height, and the external walls were about 2 feet 6 inches at the highest parts. The foundations were of flints, and instead of mortar, clay was used as the cementing material. The tiles are 15 inches by $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick, several of which were exhibited at the Lewes meeting in August, 1848.

The general form of the building will be better understood by reference to the plan.

There were no remains of other buildings found, and it is therefore difficult to say whether this formed a portion of a bath, or whether it was an ordinary room, having flues for the purpose of heating the floor. It has generally been considered that the discovery of a hypocaust, or other means of heating rooms of Roman construction, necessarily indicate such remains to be those of baths; but it has been suggested, that the Romans, while in this country, provided the means of warming other portions of their habitations besides their baths, in consequence of the difference of temperature between the climate of England and that of Italy.

Upon this subject I beg to quote the following remarks of C. Roach Smith, Esq., in a paper upon the Roman remains lately discovered in London: "With respect to heating rooms by means of hypocausts, it seems to have prevailed almost universally throughout Britain. It is very seldom we find the remains of Roman buildings without such indications, even when they are of small dimensions. In an extensive villa at Dursley, in Gloucestershire, lately laid open by P. B. Purnell, Esq., a suite of rooms (doubtless the winter apartments of the villa) was found to have been thus warmed. Among these was an apartment supposed to have been the *atrium*, of considerable extent, the roof of which was supported by two rows of stone columns; the bases are yet remaining. The constant occurrence of the hypocaust in the villas and houses discovered in this country is explained by taking into consideration the coldness of the climate in the winter months, when compared with that of Italy. The rigour of our northern winters must have been severely felt by the

Romans, and a provision against their inconvenience would be one of the chief calculations in the construction of domestic buildings. We must not lose sight of this important point in drawing comparisons between the houses of Britain and those of Italy. Thus, baths for instance, those luxurious appendages to the costly villas of the south, were probably much modified in size and accommodations in the better class of villas in the northern provinces; and we must not necessarily look for them in the smaller houses, nor forget that the chief use of furnaces and hypocausts was to provide heat to counteract the cold of the climate." (See also the 'Journal of the Archæological Association,' Jan. 1849, p. 171, &c.)

The discovery of these remains is interesting to this Society, inasmuch as it tends to strengthen the idea thrown out by the Rev. Edward Turner (*see p. 74 of this volume*), that there was a Roman way from west to east through this part of the county. The remains of Roman buildings, both at Duncton, Bignor, and Clayton are similarly situated to this under consideration, all lying about the same distance to the north of the Downs.

Horsfield, in his remarks upon the XV Iter of Richard of Cirencester, mentions Amberley as *probably* the *Anderisio* of that Iter, which also lies eastward of the Stone-street road. I do not find, however, that any objects have been found there to identify it as a Roman station.

From Bignor the building at Wiston lies in a direct line to the site of the ancient bridge across the valley of the Adur, distant about three miles east, and leading to the ascent of the Downs by Beeding Hill, from whence might be reached either *Portus Adurni*, at or near Shoreham, or *Mutuantonis*, supposed to be at Lewes, over the open Downs.

Roman tiles have been found on Fair Oak Farm, in the immediate neighbourhood, and an examination of Buncton Chapel, situate about half a mile westward, shows that in the building of that edifice these tiles were used. The chapel exhibits portions of Norman work, and the inference is, that the building at Wiston, or the spot above mentioned, must have been known to, and the materials made use of, by those engaged in erecting it.