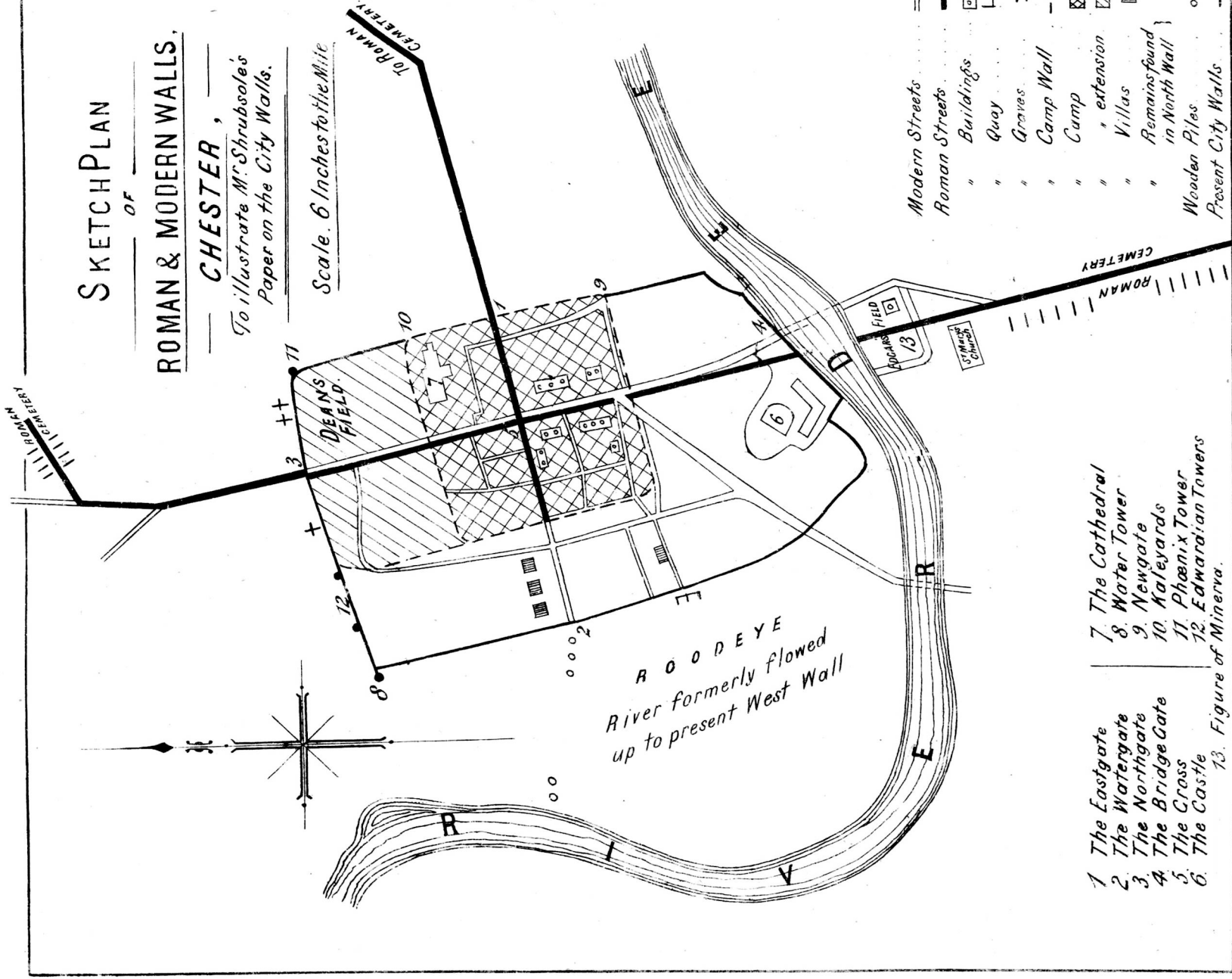


SKETCH PLAN OF ROMAN & MODERN WALLS, CHESTER,

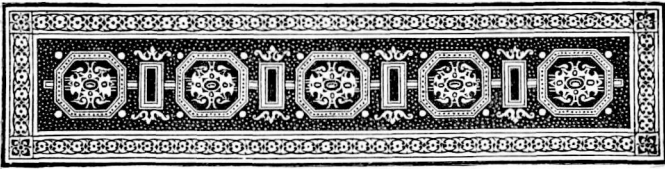
To illustrate Mr. Shrubsole's
Paper on the City Walls.

Scale. 6 Inches to the Mile



- 1 The Eastgate
- 2 The Watergate
- 3 The Newgate
- 4 The Bridge Gate
- 5 The Cross
- 6 The Castle
- 7 The Cathedral
- 8 The Water Tower
- 9 The Newgate
- 10 The Bridge Gate
- 11 The Phoenix Tower
- 12 The Edwardian Towers
- 13 The Figure of Minerva.

- Modern Streets
- Roman Streets
- Buildings
- Quay
- Graves
- Camp Wall
- Camp
- extension
- Villas
- Remains found in North Wall
- Wooden Piles
- Present City Walls



“THE WALLS OF CHESTER: ARE THEY ROMAN OR EDWARDIAN?”

A REVIEW OF THE PUBLISHED OPINIONS OF SIR JAMES PICTON, F.S.A., MR. CHARLES ROACH SMITH, F.S.A., MR. E. T. LOFTUS BROCK, F.S.A., AND MR. W. DE GRAY BIRCH, F.S.A., AS TO THE AGE OF THE NORTH WALL OF THE CITY OF CHESTER. BY GEORGE W. SHRUBSOLE, F.G.S., HON. CURATOR, CHESTER ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

(Read March 15th, 1889.)

IN 1884, consequent upon certain discoveries then made, I had the temerity to call in question the opinion which had been current since 1848, that the north wall of the city was Roman. I based my objection upon its construction, its composition, and its surroundings, as altogether different from any admittedly Roman work in Britain. I still hold to my original view as sound, and in harmony with all the older writers. If, as some authorities think, I am mistaken on this point, it is consoling to know that I am erring in good company, since the late Mr. J. H. Parker, of Oxford, thus expresses himself as to the age of our city walls: “The greater part of the superstructure, the walls themselves, and the towers are Edwardian, with a few repairs, and reconstructions of comparatively recent date.”¹ Again, Mr. Freeman, no mean authority, in a note

¹ Parker's *Mediæval Architecture of Chester*, p. 1.

to his address on the "Early History of Chester," says: "If anybody thought that the walls, as they stand, were Roman walls, or that there was any Roman work in them, besides pieces of foundation here and there, his error was so plain, as hardly to be worth arguing against."¹ Here I may allude to the part taken in this discussion by the distinguished Roman epigraphist and antiquary, the late Thompson Watkin. His views on the question, as the result of personal investigation, will be found in the pages of *Roman Cheshire*,² and are thus summed up—"The wall is not Roman *in situ*, in any portion."

Again with regard to the peculiar masonry seen in our north wall, two admissions of much weight have been made by well-known antiquaries. Wright, speaking of our north wall, says: "There is no other example of a Roman town wall in our island which presents the same description of masonry as Chester."³ Mr. Brock is equally candid, for he says,⁴ "I am willing to admit that it is unlike any other city wall in England." When we bear in mind the unity of method which characterises Roman constructive works, admissions of this kind are really fatal. At any rate they redeem my own view from any appearance of singularity, or *prima facie* improbability. A further word of explanation is due. My remarks originally were based upon the discoveries made in 1883. The later discoveries of 1887 and 1888 have called forth no less than eight papers of considerable merit, several of these will be found in vol. ii. of the Society's *Journal*.⁵ The task which I now propose to myself is to carefully examine the various reasons advanced by the several writers for believing the wall to be Roman,

¹ *Archaeological Journal*, vol. xliii., p. 265. ² *Roman Cheshire*, p. 97.

³ Wright's *Uriconium*, p. 90.

⁴ *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 47.

⁵ They were also reprinted with some additional papers in *Roman Remains in Chester*, edited by Mr. J. P. Earwaker, M.A., F.S.A.

and to ascertain how far they are valid and how far fallacious. For my part my only desire has been to arrive at the facts of the case, so far as they are ascertainable. Should it be established beyond doubt that the north wall is Roman, then we shall have lighted upon a remarkable and interesting fact; but if not we shall have the facts all the same, and a very interesting wall.

NATURE OF THE DEVAN CAMP.

There is an omission common to most writers on the subject of the walls which I take the liberty of pointing out, viz., that not one of them seem to have fully realised what Deva was as a fortified camp in Roman times. It is to be borne in mind that the Roman annexation of Britain was conducted in a systematic way. From a central station in the south of England two parallel military lines diverged northwards, one along the east coast, the other the west. Along these lines (afterwards to be known as streets), at intervals of fifteen or twenty miles, was erected a small station, walled or otherwise, two or three acres in extent. Other places along the route having a settled population were surrounded by an irregular wall, often of considerable extent, as in the case of Uriconium. In addition to these military stations and walled towns there existed at certain points of strategic importance, often eighty or a hundred miles apart, a castrum, serving as a base of operations, and at the same time the headquarters of one of the legions. Such were Chester, Gloucester, Lincoln, and York. Chester had not its equal in the south. London at the time was probably without a wall. The only one that could be compared to Chester was York, and that more on the ground of its importance in later times. Deva was not environed by an irregular town wall, as some would have it, but, in the

nature of things, by one built on a strictly Roman model, with all the details as to the direction and width of streets, and the construction of the walls and gates which we are familiar with in Roman military writers. It was the headquarters and training depôt of the Twentieth Legion. As such its walls would be as secure as the skill of Julius Frontinus and Agricola could make them. It was the Metz of the north-west provinces, and history has no mention of its walls having been assailed during the time it was held by the Romans. With just pride we often speak of our city as "rare old Chester." It well deserves the title, since in Roman times, as we have seen, it was second to no Roman fortress in Britain. Enough of its importance remained even in Saxon times, for they called it "Ceastre," from *Castra*, the camp *par excellence*. There are hundreds of places in England bearing the name of Chester with a prefix, but there is still only one "Chester." Its British name, *Caer leon vawr* (the camp of the great legion), implies as much. So that Cestrians have something to be proud of in their "rare old Chester." History is but repeating itself in the fact that the Chester of to-day is once more the headquarters of the British forces in the North-Western District. If the position I have assigned to *Deva* be the correct one, then the only conclusion to arrive at is that the present north wall, which is admittedly unlike any other Roman wall in England, either as to material or construction, does not in any degree approach the standard of the *Devan* camp, or the character of the walls built by Julius Agricola.

SIR JAMES PICTON'S HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE
CITY WALLS.

As historic data are of the greatest importance, I propose briefly to notice those gathered together by Sir

James Picton. To commence then, when the Roman wall was five hundred years old—an old wall, in fact—we are told that “Ethelfrith the Saxon inflicted a terrible vengeance on the district, immediately followed by the fall and destruction of Chester.”¹ So complete was this overthrow “that the city thus sacked and destroyed remained in ruins nearly three hundred years.” Of the period between A.D. 607 and A.D. 872 Sir James Picton says:² “The Saxon conquerors shrank from being circumscribed within city walls. These were, therefore, probably broken down, and in many cases levelled with the ground.” Of the Danish invasion in A.D. 894, we are told³ “they made a forced march across country to Lega Ceaster. They could not storm the place, but beset the walls for two days, took all the cattle, and slew all the men they could overtake.” Reference is also made to the statement of Matthew Paris that “the city of Lege Chester was destroyed by the Danes.” “That the destruction was ruthless and sanguinary there can be no doubt.” After having thus from historical records shown that the Roman wall in all probability had been practically destroyed two or three times over by the British, Northumbrians, Danes, and the early Saxons, Sir James proceeds to undo the force of his remarks by stating “that the supposed destruction of the wall is not warranted by anything recorded.” “It may compare,” he says,⁴ “with the sack of Anderida (Peveney), where the interior was utterly destroyed; but the walls and town remain to the present day in all their massive strength. So it was probably the case at Chester, but not to the same extent.” “Giraldus Cambrensis (A.D. 1147 to 1220) describes it as surrounded by excellent

¹ Presidential Address, *British Archaeological Association*, 1887, p. 8.

² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

walls, with many remains of its original grandeur—palaces, baths, towers, temples, &c., &c.”¹ Unfortunately for this piece of evidence, the reference of Giraldus is not to Chester, but to a place two hundred miles away in South Wales, namely, Caerleon. Nor is this the only mistake committed. Giraldus speaks of courses of brick to be seen in the walls—Roman brick, of course. The explanation which is given of this awkward fact is as follows:² “It is rather a hazardous guess, but it might be that the ecclesiastic, accustomed to the rough masonry of Wales, on seeing the regular coursed ashlar of Roman work, hastily classed it with the coursed brickwork which he had seen elsewhere.” It is, indeed, hazardous to assume that Giraldus did not know the difference between brick and stone—between thin Roman bricks and the “massive” courses of stone in our walls. But Giraldus is right, for he was again speaking, not of the Walls of Chester, but of Caerleon, in South Wales, to which the description is strictly applicable.

THE REBUILDING OF THE CITY WALLS AT VARIOUS TIMES.

Sir James Picton's historic notes are faulty to the extent that he mentions only one side of the question relating to the wall, namely, its destruction from time to time. Nothing is said about the several rebuildings, which are equally part of our local history. We will glance at some of these restorations. We have, first of all, to think of the walls laid low by Ethelfrith in A.D. 607, after two hundred years of neglect, followed by three hundred of wanton waste, enough surely to ruin any wall, so that we are

¹ Presidential Address, *British Archaeological Association*, 1887, p. 10.

² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

prepared to hear what Higden (in A.D. 1300) tells us, that Ethelfleda "enclosed the city with new walls, and made it nigh to as it was before." Saxon work was never substantial. Hence with the advent of the Norman Conqueror we find a compulsory order for the rebuilding of the walls, to which all the subjects of the Earl of Chester were to contribute, in person or money. A Norman wall in consequence replaced the Saxon. Three hundred years later, in the great building age of the Edwards, we have the wall rebuilt, and furnished in a way not seen since Roman times, but only one or two sides on the Roman lines. This wall we see depicted in Braun's map, showing a very complete encircling wall, the gates strongly fortified, with seventeen towers spread over the circumference. Where was the Roman wall at that time? Now, how best can we connect these statements of pulling down and rebuilding the wall? First of all it is evident that the Roman wall did not survive beyond eight hundred years; then the Saxons we find building outside the Roman lines, followed by the Normans, who were great builders in stone. In three hundred years these walls would become insecure. The rebuilding of them was part of the policy which led to the erection of Flint, Rhuddlan, Conway, and Caernarvon Castles. The foundations now found along the north wall, and the wall itself, all belong to this period. In all I have enumerated four walls of which we have historic record. Some modern experts can find now only the oldest—the Roman—the least likely to be there. We have a right to ask, if this be so, and to have pointed out, the Saxon, Norman or Edwardian, all of which are ignored, and failing in obtaining a satisfactory reply, will rightly conclude that the Roman, Saxon, and Norman walls have all disappeared, and that what has survived belongs to the Edwardian age. In this view I am confirmed by the late J. H. Parker, who

distinctly states that the walls and towers are Edwardian.¹ Still more weighty is the evidence of Braun's map of Chester, *circa* 1574, showing undoubted Edwardian work then existing in the time of Elizabeth, much of which still survives in the wall. The appeal to history, as we have seen, gives no countenance to the opinion that we have Roman work above ground in the north wall.

SIR JAMES PICTON ON THE POSITION OF THE SOUTH WALL.

Speaking of the extent of the Roman wall, Sir James Picton remarks,² "Above ground the ascertained Roman portion is limited to the wall near the Northgate, and to a small part in the south wall, east of the Bridge Gate." With this view of the identity of the character of the wall at the places mentioned I quite agree. At the same time I do not for a moment admit that they are Roman in either case. As to the south wall, we have a variety of evidence of considerable weight, which would go to show that the south wall of the Roman castrum never extended beyond the line of Pepper Street and Black Friars. Other walls of the camp were enlarged, while the south wall, for some good reason, was a fixed point so long as it was held by the Romans. To give the evidence for this *in extenso* would be tedious, therefore, I only give the heads in passing. There was the creek at Black Friars, a natural barrier, which evidently determined the boundaries of the wall southwards. The projected extension is three hundred yards in advance of this line. Within this area we have found nothing Roman of importance, no altars or foundations of buildings, but we have found a sewer on the

¹ Parker's *Mediæval Architecture of Chester*, p. 1.

² Presidential Address, *British Archaeological Association*, 1887, p. 34.

outside of the inner line of wall, while inside of it and close by we have found foundations of a series of buildings, including a colonnaded structure in line, and only one hundred feet from it. The intervening space was found to be a hard paved way, and was doubtless the intervallum. Mr. Brock mentions the discovery of Roman foundations at the North Gate. Assuming this to be correct, we have no difficulty in ascertaining the point in the south wall where the south gate was placed. At the place calculated, two years ago we found Roman foundations extending over an area of fourteen feet.¹ It was formed of the hardest stone concrete, in which a profusion of mortar had been used. Then there is the documentary evidence of the Charter of Henry VII., showing that the civic boundary did not then extend to the present south wall. To this day all around the Castle area is in the jurisdiction of the county of Chester, which points to what I have no doubt was the fact, that in early times the boundary of the city on the south was nearer the line of Pepper Street and Black Friars than the present wall. Moreover, the Devan fortress, as we have seen, was one constructed on military lines. To regard the present south wall as being on the original Roman site would require us to suppose the camp to have been irregularly constructed. No one gate, for instance, would have been in the centre of its own line of wall; and the wall as a whole neither square nor rectangular. We need to be reminded that there was such an officer in the Devan camp as the *Præfectus Castrorum*, whose tombstone is now in our Museum. Then there is the evidence that the Saxons were the first to build a wall which included the Castle. These several items go far to prove that the Roman south wall never extended beyond

¹ By the tower and steps of St. Michael's Church.

the line mentioned. On the other hand, what evidence have we that the Roman wall was built, as suggested, on the river bank, in the river in fact, as the silty foundations show? None whatever, beyond the opinion that the masonry is similar; which may be and probably is true. The mass of evidence we have deduced is against the wall by the river being Roman; but then we are told that the two walls are of the same age. If the south wall is not Roman, as the evidence proves, then it follows that the north wall has no claim to be considered Roman.

THE ABSENCE OF MORTAR IN THE WALL NO PROOF
OF THE WALL BEING ROMAN.

Mr. Brock argues that the north wall built of Roman stones without mortar is Roman in date from base to summit so far as the dry masonry extends.¹ This assertion will be felt by most antiquaries to be startling, so far as Roman work in England is concerned. Mr. Brock himself admits it—"This is certainly a novel feature, for we can point to nothing in England on such a scale of magnificence."² He then goes on to say that the Romans did build without mortar in Chester. The proof of this statement we are supposed to have in the sculptured stones, the joints of which it is said show that no mortar was used in their original construction. This view I shall have no difficulty in showing to be an erroneous one. Every ruined abbey in England, the walls of which have been dismantled a few hundred years, has abundance of stones around its walls which are free from mortar. It is well known that rain water, with its carbonic acid, is a special solvent of mortar. Notice, for instance, how it

¹ *Journal Chester Archaeological Soc.*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 54.

² *Ibid.*, p. 53.

is removed by this action from the interstices between the bricks in modern houses. As well might a visitor to one of these abbeys, taking up a mortarless stone fallen from the walls, instance it as a proof that the monks originally had used no mortar in the construction of the abbey. The instances are analogous. What, then, is the explanation of finding these stones without mortar? It is simply that the Roman buildings to which reference has been made had long remained in a ruined state, exposed to the weather, which had removed most of the mortar, before the stones were re-used in the north wall. We thus see that the suggestion of so unlikely a thing as the non-use of mortar by the Romans is altogether needless. It is unnecessary to suppose that several colonnaded buildings, elaborately constructed with friezes, cornices, and copings, and described by one of the writers as "splendour and grandeur"¹ itself, were all put together without mortar, or clamps of any kind. The supposition carries with it its own refutation. To Mr. Brock's statement that the Romans constructed buildings in Chester without mortar, I am bound to say that so far as my own observation goes there is no evidence of that practice. For thirty years I have noted from time to time any exposure of Roman work, and in every instance the characteristic feature has been stones laid in a bed of mortar, or flooded with mortar. The gas and water engineers, when laying pipes in the city, often come in contact with it, and would confirm what I have said. Two years ago twelve or fourteen feet of walling was met with in Watergate Street, four feet below the surface, and is there still, to speak of what Roman mural work was in Deva. Its preservation is due to the circumstance of its being buried, and not sub-

¹ *Chester Archaeological and Historic Society*, vol. ii., N.S., p. 4.

ject to atmospheric action. I find, on careful examination, that the stones from the wall do retain here and there a portion of mortar, a patch of six or eight inches in some, enough to prove the point. More than that, in 1884, I saw taken out of the north wall a mass of Roman mortar, evidently from the core of a wall, and weighing one hundred-weight. I may also mention, that there is in the Museum a large fragment of walling built with mortar from the villa at Black Friars. I hope to be able to show that not only did the Romans use mortar in Deva, but that Deva was a depôt for lime for the stations around. There are two localities from which Chester might have been supplied with lime, Derbyshire fifty miles away, and the Welsh hills eight miles distant. No wonder that the Romans selected the latter, and erected there a small station, now Caer Gwrle, at the foot of the limestone hills. Tiles with the stamp of the Twentieth Legion have been found there. We have also found limestone blocks among Roman *debris* on the Roodeye, showing that a supply came also by water. With these means of securing an unlimited supply of lime, it is not likely that the Romans in Deva were driven to the shift of laying stones without mortar. Lime could not have been a scarce commodity in Roman times. It was so in later times in Chester, since the interior of the Cathedral walls is made up with dry rubble without mortar. The reason is apparent. The Roman roads in this country scarcely underwent repairs until the times of Elizabeth, when they were about worn out. It is highly probable that even in Edwardian times the roads to the hills were not passable for heavy traffic, and hence lime for building purposes, as far as possible, had to be dispensed with, and earth used as a substitute. To sum up our case on this point, we have the evidence of existing Roman walling in Chester built with mortar; the profuse use of it

in tessellated floors, and foundations containing more mortar than stone; its existence in patches on the inscribed stones, and not least the mountains of limestone near Chester; these, taken together, directly negative the statement that the Romans in Chester built walls and temples without mortar.

THE SUPPOSED PECULIAR CONSTRUCTION OF THE WALL.

This point is considered one of some importance since two writers lay considerable stress upon it. Mr. Brock thus propounds his view:¹ "The construction adopted must have required forethought and correspondence with the workers at the quarry. The builder must have set out his rod, determining the heights of the varying courses, for while the stones are of equal height to each course, they are not the same one course with the other. As set out so must they have been worked at the quarry. As worked, so must they have been delivered, sorted, and built. The face stones bear incontestable evidence that they have been fashioned by Roman hands." Again, attention is called to the fact that ²"The stones on the north wall are laid in such regular courses that every architect or builder who has seen them is at once convinced that they must have been carefully dressed in the quarries to certain definite heights before being used for the wall. This would therefore show that those who placed them in their present position, were those who originally had them dressed in the quarries. But every one admits that these stones are undoubtedly Roman, and bear the tool marks of the Roman masons; hence if those who originally dressed them in the quarries built them into the wall, as we now see them, then

¹ *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 47.

² *Roman Remains in Chester*, Mr. Earwaker's Introduction, p. xiii.

this portion of the Chester walls is undoubtedly Roman.” Of course, a wall could have been built after the above elaborate fashion. By the evidence of its contents, I shall proceed to show that it was not so constructed, that in fact the description is too highly coloured and imaginative. The architect and his measuring rod, the sandstone quarry, and the quarrymen, the dressing, sorting, and delivering the stones from the quarry, are all, I shall show, needlessly imported on to the scene of operations. First, we may get rid of the quarry, and the quarrying, by remembering that all the stones of the wall, with the exception of the outside face, came from Roman buildings then existing in the city, in a more or less ruined state at the time of the building of the wall, and not from a sandstone quarry. There are two witnesses to this fact. The first is the moulded, sculptured, and inscribed stones, to the number of one hundred and thirty-eight, found in the wall and thought worthy of a place in our Museum. The next witness is Sir Henry Dryden, who visited the openings, and thus describes the interior:¹ “Nearly the whole of the material of the part taken out and rebuilt consisted of sculptured stones—plinths, cornices, copings, sepulchral slabs, bas-reliefs of figures about two feet high, and other moulded stones—evidently the remains of large, ornate, solid buildings.” The bulk of the stones in the wall came from “large, ornate, solid Roman buildings.” There is no getting over this, for the stones tell their own tale. The quarrying, dressing, sorting, delivering, spoken of, as well as the forethought, and correspondence with the workers at the quarry and the wall, all disappear, as being unsupported by evidence. There remains still the outer face of the wall to be accounted for, which is supposed to show in some special degree the forethought

¹ Letter in *Academy*, October 1st, 1887.

of the builder in seeking out with his rod the varying heights of the courses. Now, all writers on the present discoveries seem agreed that from the two openings in the wall we have recovered stones which point to five distinctive Roman buildings. Mr. Birch thus describes them :¹ "One of these buildings, with more or less rectangular plan, and on a massive scale ; another had a curvilinear outline in plan. One was enriched with pilasters, or columns having the capitals decorated after the well-known Corinthian type ; another had the intercolumnar slab carved with reeded or fluted countersunk bands, semi-circular in section, alternating with strips." No fragments from these buildings are more remarkable than the dentil cornice-work, of which we have so many examples. Now, if the cornices of a building survive, so must the plain-worked stones which carried the cornice. You will not ordinarily have one without the other. You may have the plain stone without the cornice, but not the cornice without the plain stone ; call it ashlar if you please. We say, then, that the plain stones from the Roman buildings were used to build the outside face of the north wall, while the moulded stones were disposed of as best they could be to make up the rest of the wall, a very common-sense proceeding, I think it will be generally conceded. But, then, we are told that the courses are not all the same height. This is precisely what might be expected. It is too much to think the stone courses in the five houses would be all of the same height, for while solid in structure they evidently varied considerably in style. The height of the courses depended upon the size of the supply of stone to hand from the dilapidated buildings. There yet remains the architect of this work to be disposed of. Sir

¹ *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol ii., p. 128.

Henry Dryden told us the nature of the stones. Sir James Picton will tell us in what order they were laid. This is his account:¹ "The moulded and sculptured stones were thrown in promiscuously, without any order or attempt at bedding." The orderly arrangement made out at the onset, the planning, the measuring, the dressing, the sorting of the stones; not least, the controlling mind, the architect, all are reduced to very moderate dimensions when the interior of the wall is looked into by unprejudiced minds. The simple and probable story of the stones is, that they were brought from the ruined portion of the Roman city in the stirring and building times of the three Edwards. This point will come before us later on.

ON CERTAIN PECULIARITIES IN THE STRUCTURE OF
THE WALL MENTIONED BY VARIOUS WRITERS.

Several features have been noticed in the north wall which are supposed to favour the theory of a Roman origin. Thus Mr. de Gray Birch describes the walls of Chester as² "Cyclopean, built *more Romano* of fine squared stones, set together with very close joints, and no mortar." To this statement I take exception, since the want of mortar, the massive blocks of stone, and the fine jointed masonry are not the characteristic feature of any Roman castra wall existing in Britain. In this place I will only notice one or two peculiarities in the stone work. The masonry is described as having very fine joints. It was only on the outside of the wall that the stones were sufficiently regular for this to be in any degree true. For the interior was of the rudest kind of work, even to the use of undressed stones. Rather than rely on my own observation, I will quote from

¹ Presidential Address, *British Archaeological Association*, p. 28.

² *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 35.

one whose description will carry conviction, the more so since it is "the result of three days' examination of the wall." Sir James Picton says:¹ "The outer skin is squared ashlar, the rest is rough rubble, with an inner facing. It is here that the bulk of the moulded and sculptured stones were found. They, too, have been thrown in promiscuously, without any order or attempt at bedding." Mr. Birch, in quoting this passage, omits the last paragraph. It is difficult to understand how, when the stones composing the interior of the wall have been thrown down without any order or attempt at bedding, that the wall itself can be said to have fine jointed masonry. In this conflict of evidence as to the construction of the wall, I think that we must give credit to the statement of Sir James Picton. Besides, I may say that his statement is confirmed by the remarks of several gentlemen who saw the wall when it was exposed.² I mentioned on a previous occasion that so loosely jointed were the rows of stones that I saw the masons employed pass their arm between the stones to feel for inscriptions. This statement Mr. Brock thought scarcely possible. What I saw has been confirmed by what has been since brought to light. Since 1887 much of the soil on the rock shelf on the outside of the wall has been removed, when it was noticed that a large tree on the outside of the wall had sent its roots, as large as a ship's cable, through the wall into the more kindly pasture of the Deanery field. Mr. de Gray Birch speaks of the walls as "Cyclopean." The use of this word as applied to any stones in the north wall is a mistake. We have stones as large in the walls of the Cathedral and the older churches in the city, as are to be seen on the outer face of the north wall. No one would think of speaking of the

¹ Presidential Address, *British Archaeological Association*, p. 28.

² *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 88.

stones in our churches as cyclopean, nor is the term applicable to any masonry seen in the wall. Large stones from our local sandstone are to be found all over the city, and in the quarries the bed of stone is of considerable thickness, and there would be no difficulty in procuring stones four or six feet square. Again it is urged that the wall is Roman since "the massive style of building seen there does not agree with any undoubted mediæval work with which we are familiar." The various drawings of the wall may at first sight appear to support this statement, but we have to remember that the first drawing is only a "diagrammatic section of the wall," a somewhat elastic term; and on further looking into it we find that there are twenty courses of stone in twenty feet, giving an average of twelve inches in depth for each course of stone. A wall built of stones of this thickness in Chester calls for no remark, for the reason I have assigned. The terms "massive" and "cyclopean" are both out of place. So far from there being no mediæval work in the city to compare with the north wall we have abundant examples in the walls of the Cathedral, and in all the older churches of the city. I will select from two churches. St. Peter's Church: On the south front of the exterior wall are four courses of stone, six feet eight inches high, or an average of twenty inches for each course. In the porch are two stones, seven feet long, two feet three inches wide, and one foot eight inches deep. No stone from the wall can approach this in size. In the interior are several pieces of stone work of twelve courses, seventeen feet high, or an average of one foot five inches for each course. Cathedral: In the porch are six courses of stone, averaging thirteen inches. In the south transept there are five courses of stone, averaging eighteen inches. Not to be tedious, I may say that in the nave and in other parts of the Cathedral, there are a score of instances

in which the size of the stones far exceeds anything to be seen at the north wall. So that, if size of masonry is to be the test of the wall being Roman or otherwise, the churches in the city have a better title to that distinction than the wall.

WHY NO MEDIÆVAL FRAGMENTS ARE FOUND IN
THE WALL.

Again another question is asked—¹“Had the walls been built in mediæval times, is it not probable that some fragments of buildings, or tombs of later date, such as Saxon or Norman, would have been met with, and similarly used up for the interior of the wall?” I do not for a moment dispute the fact that no Saxon or Norman stonework has been found in the wall. But is it a fair inference that if the wall was built in the time of the Edwards (which is the date I assign to it) we ought to find sculptured stones of that age? I think not, for this, if for no other reason, so far as the Saxon stones are concerned, that there was no distinctive feature in their masonry; in fact they were not builders in stone. As to the Norman builders, an interval of two hundred years or so, as between one period and another, is scarcely sufficient time for stone erections to have become worthless. Again besides the Norman churches, there was no supply of distinctive Norman masonry that could have been available for the wall. The Norman castle remained in fair preservation until the sixteenth century. The only objects likely to afford fragments of stone for building in the wall would be one of the churches. The relations between the abbey and the civic power in Chester at this time were not of that friendly nature to warrant the idea. In the same way we

¹ *Roman Remains in Chester*, Mr. Earwaker's Introduction, p. xiv.

can understand the ecclesiastics resisting the spoliation of their graveyards, while not objecting to the use of stone from the Roman cemeteries. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the Roman ruins in and about the city, would seem to have been a common quarry for the civic as well as the ecclesiastical power. The town authorities would seem to have taken the larger share, as the wall is witness, and also an inscribed stone found at the castle ; in addition there is a wall there in which there is a course of Roman bricks, while fragments of tile, pottery, and Roman mortar will be found filling up the spaces between the rough stonework.¹ On the other hand, several Roman fragments, and an inscribed stone were found during the progress of the late restoration of the Cathedral, built into the wall of the Lady Chapel. In 1884, in White Friars, we found the foundations of the monastery, the wall being built of Roman stones, while below it were the ruins of a colonnaded building. In another wall close by, in which Roman stones predominated, were found two Mithraic figures. In the monastery wall by the Roodeye is a course of Roman tiles. It was only too evident that the monks had helped themselves from ruins existing. The conclusion to arrive at would seem to be that we have no right to expect Saxon or Norman relics in the wall. Their absence proves nothing. Indeed, the presence of a Norman carved stone would be more difficult to explain than its absence.

ON THE MONUMENTAL STONES FOUND IN THE WALL.

A remarkable fact in the composition of the north wall is the inclusion of many sepulchral monuments. Nearly one-third of the moulded stones are of that nature. Their presence is a source of embarrassment to the advocates of

¹ Watkin's *Roman Cheshire*, p. 195.

the Roman origin of the wall. Mr. Brock would regard the present north wall as an increase of the Roman area in later Roman times, which included the cemeteries.¹ "What is more reasonable than to suppose that on the extension of the area the Roman sepulchres were demolished, and the stones thus ready at hand, on the spot, used in the building of the wall?" The extension of the area is highly probable, but there is no evidence to show that the space so included had been a Roman cemetery. We know of the existence elsewhere of three Roman cemeteries, some distance out of the city, along the street, on the sites of which the ground is thickly strewn with fragments of cinerary urns; while all that has been found in the present century, in the included area, has been a solitary urn. Besides, the rock comes very near the surface, rendering the ground unfit for the purpose. The three tiled graves found in the Infirmary field were outside the line of what is generally accepted as the west wall. Further, it may be urged that the cemeteries on the east and south are a mile outside the camp. These details are shown on the map of the Roman camp.² With the well-known objection of the Romans to intramural interments, it is not likely that a cemetery would be allowed so near the north wall in a city of the size of Deva. Further, the monuments are largely in excess of what could be accommodated within the area. The two openings in the wall have yielded thirty monuments. If the rest of the wall proved equally productive we should have five hundred to reckon with. Then there is the difficulty of accounting for the Romans despoiling their cemeteries, and thereby violating their well-known law on the matter. As bearing on this point,

¹ *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 53.

² Opposite p. 80.

I may quote from Mr. Roach Smith,¹ "The Roman burial places were secured to the owners by law, being held to be sacred. It was sufficient for the true freeholder, in order to make a piece of his land inviolable, to bury a corpse in it. The act hallowed the spot, and made it a *locus religiosus*." Enough has been said to show that the included area in Northgate-street, was not the site of a Roman cemetery.

DID THE ROMANS BUILD THE MONUMENTAL STONES
INTO THE WALL?

The other question, as to whether the Romans built the monumental stones into the wall, has not been fairly grasped or satisfactorily answered. If such is affirmed to be the case, it then means that the Romans were guilty of violating their sacred places, and despoiling monuments and tombs for the purpose of building a rampart. No instance of the kind is known to me. The fact has been mentioned that in Rome there are a few instances of a sepulchral monument built into the wall on the outside, to be seen and read by all. Such, for instance, as the case mentioned by Mr. Hodgkin of the tomb built up in the Porta Salara, in Rome, in the reign of Domitian, to the memory of the young poet Sulpicus Maximus, who died at the age of twelve.² Here it is apparent that the tomb has been placed there as a special mark of honour to the memory of a young and promising poet. Very different this from the treatment of burying the tombstone face downwards in the inside of a wall nine feet thick, and twenty feet high. If the desecration was not done by the Romans, was it done by the Saxons, who succeeded them? Mr.

¹ *Collectanea Antiqua*, vol. ii., p. 200.

² *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 89.

Roach Smith tells us: ¹“The Saxons resorted to the Roman burial places as sacred and respected, for frequently the Roman and Saxon cemeteries are found contiguous to each other.” Other considerations have led us to the conclusion that the present wall was not the work of the Saxons, but some weight may justly be attached to this statement. We know that at the date to which I assign the construction of the wall ancient monuments were largely utilised as material for the building of walls, castles, and even churches. Hundreds of instances of this kind will be forthcoming if needful. The utilisation of Roman tombstones to build the wall, we have spoken of as an act not likely to have been the work of either Romans or Saxons. There is a further charge of mutilating the monuments to be preferred against the builders. Take for instance, the so-called ecclesiastical stone which, only for the mutilated faces of the females, would have ranked as one of the finest examples of Britanno-Roman sculptures; or the three-quarter life size figure of a standard bearer, from which all the features have been hacked away. Even in its present form Mr. Birch speaks of it as an elegant piece of Roman work, deserving a place of honour in the Museum. The condition of many of the monuments in the Museum is sadly suggestive of wanton mutilation. Very few persons, I think, would like to admit that the Romans were guilty of thus acting to the remains of their departed. Yet nothing is more certain than this—that if the Romans built the walls, as asserted, they committed the outrage.

ON THE PRESERVATION AND DURATION OF THE RED
SANDSTONE OF CHESTER.

In considering the possibility of Roman work surviving to the present day in a wall above ground, composed of

¹ *Collectanea Antiqua*, vol. vii., p. 200.

our local stone, an interesting point is raised. Sir James Picton writes thus:¹ "We must remember that one thousand two hundred and eighty years have elapsed since the Saxon ravages, and nearly a thousand since the restoration by Ethelfleda. Supposing the walls had been left intact, the effects of time and weather, and the continued interference by successive generations, with their varying wants and requirements, and the necessary repairs from time to time, must have destroyed to a great extent the identity of the original construction. Not so, however, with the work below the surface. Here the masonry, protected from the destructive influences of frost and weather, if not intentionally interfered with, would last for an indefinite period in a sound condition." Here we have pointed out very clearly the different effects produced on our sandstone when exposed to the weather and when buried in the ground. Exposed to the weather it crumbles away in from two to four centuries; buried at sufficient depth it will last from one to two thousand years. This is true of all our stone work in Chester. Its age is limited. The Geological Survey thus remark of our stone:² "The inferiority of the stone from the pebble beds is shown by the condition of Chester Cathedral (before its restoration) and St. John's Church Tower." The remark of Sir James Picton that "the destructive influence of frost and weather, and repairs from time to time, must have destroyed to a great extent the identity of the original stone,"³ is one with which I entirely agree; but in summing up his conclusions, while agreeing that the greater part of the walls is more recent,

¹ Presidential Address, *British Archaeological Association*, 1887.

² *Memoirs Geological Survey So.*, s.w., p. 3.

³ Presidential Address, *British Archaeological Association*, 1887, p. 23.

he regards as Roman an exposed wall two hundred yards long and twenty feet high, having previously shown that such a survival was impossible. To look at the point more in detail, Sir James Picton points out that the disturbing effect of eighteen hundred years must have destroyed to a great extent the identity of the wall if above ground; yet in a plate which is given there are figured the minute details of an existing cornice moulding which is spoken of as a crowning feature in the Roman work. An unknown feature, I remark, in Roman castration. We are required to suppose that this cornice has remained unimpaired under exactly those conditions which would have destroyed it.

THE WEATHERING OF RED SANDSTONE.

As the effect of weather on our weak stone bears directly on the question, a few remarks in further elucidation of the subject may be allowed. The Phoenix Tower may be cited as an example. This has been recased three times in three hundred years. Again, Pemberton's Parlour was repaired in the reign of Queen Anne, and again wholly recased within the last ten years. Of the other Edwardian Towers fully two-thirds of them have disappeared, and the remainder restored and recased, until scarcely an original stone is left. As to the Cathedral, of its appearance prior to the late restoration, we are all more or less familiar. Its condition was thus described by a competent authority, the late Sir Gilbert Scott: "The decay of the external stonework throughout the Cathedral is most lamentable—probably no building in England has suffered so severely." In confirmation of this, I would point to the as yet unrestored western angle of the south transept.

¹ *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, vol. iii., p. 180.

It will be seen that the facing stone, eighteen inches deep, has wholly decayed, and the inner core of the wall has been laid bare. This is the result of four hundred years' exposure. Another illustration of the weathering of our sandstone is to be seen in the fourteenth-century work of the Abbey Gateway. The outer walls of the upper storey have been missing for the last one hundred and fifty years. So far as the outer walls of the Cathedral are concerned there have been four restorations. The finest relic of old masonry in the city is the Water Tower, at the north-west angle of the walls, built in 1322. It is now just five hundred and sixty-seven years old. Its weather-worn stones tell of the effect of time, for some of them are cut back twelve or fourteen inches. It has been much repaired at various periods during the last two hundred years. St. John's Church will furnish another illustration. Mr. J. H. Parker describing the tower, which in 1857 was a distinguished landmark, says of it: ¹ "The walls were cased on the exterior, and the upper part built in the time of Henry VIII., and the tower now appears entirely as one of that period. The surface of the stone, which has been richly ornamented with panelling, especially on the north side, has again perished, so much as to require to be renewed a second time." Its story is briefly this. Rebuilt in 1509, stone perished, and ornamental work disappeared and required rebuilding in 1857. This was not done, and so in 1884 the tower fell. What could more strongly emphasise the fact of the natural weakness of our local stone? Built in 1509, fell in 1884. Similar was the fate of two other towers belonging to the church, which fell in the sixteenth century, after a life of three hundred years. In the instance of these church towers, four hundred years has been the

¹ Parker's *Mediæval Architecture of Chester*, pp. 6, 7.

extreme life of the stone. With the evidence of these local examples before us, we have only to show that the stone in the north wall is in every respect identical with that used in the buildings quoted, and a very strong case is made out that the wall was not built by the Romans, or it would have perished ere this. The evidence is to hand. The bed of stone on which Chester is built carries with it, so to speak, a brand in the shape of small well-rounded pebbles scattered through the stone. Now, looking over the front of the north wall near the Northgate the pebbles are visible to the eye projecting from the stone. This completes the evidence, proving beyond doubt that the north wall is built of our local sandstone.

MR. BROCK'S OPINION OF THE RED SANDSTONE.

We will now consider the opinion of Mr. Brock on this question, who evidently has not the intimate acquaintance with our sandstone possessed by Sir James Picton. The conclusion come to by Mr. Brock is, that it was possible to find a red sandstone capable of resisting the action of the elements from Roman times even when exposed to the weather. In confirmation of this view he remarks that at Bebington Church the tool marks of Norman date are plainly visible. Unfortunately for this illustration Bebington Church is not built of red sandstone, but from a stone of a different geological horizon; and therefore the case is not one on all fours with our local sandstone. Apart from this circumstance I am told by a local resident that the tool marks visible on the outside are not in Norman but sixteenth-century work. Another instance given is from the Vicarage grounds of Bromborough. Mr. Brock there found several examples of interlaced work of Celtic type. These stones, we are told, are perfect, and that the stones have borne the test of exposure for

nine hundred years. I have much pleasure in giving what I doubt not is the real history of these interesting stones, forwarded to me by Mr. Cox, a resident at Bebington. The stones are part of one or more Runic crosses—say of pre-Norman date—which originally stood in the churchyard, and on their decay, between A.D. 1400 and 1500, they were replaced by a larger Gothic cross, of which only the massive base now remains. The fragments of the earlier crosses were afterwards built into the walls of the church, where they remained until about sixty years ago, when some repairs once more brought them to light. Their preservation, such as it is, is due to the same action as the Roman stones in the north wall—namely, exclusion from the weather. The history of these crosses, as we have seen, gives no countenance to the idea that our sandstone when exposed will last eighteen hundred years. For what are the facts? The Norman cross perished in A.D. 1500, and the one replacing it has only the remnant of a base left. So we have two successive crosses existing eight hundred or nine hundred years. Into the difference of opinion regarding the behaviour of our sandstone, expressed by Sir James Picton and Mr. Brock, I do not think it necessary for me to enter further.

ROMAN STONES FOUND IN THE WALL NO PROOF OF
ITS ROMAN ORIGIN.

The fact of Roman stones having been found in the north wall Mr. Brock would regard as proof of its Roman origin, and he cites the case of the Roman walls of the cities of Gaul, &c., as having been constructed of masonry that had formed part of older Roman ornamental buildings; also the case of the four bastions, similarly constructed of Roman sculptured stones, built against the Roman wall of London. For the bastions he would claim a later Roman

origin, but still Roman. Regarding our north wall, the walls of certain cities on the Continent, and the bastions outside the London wall, as probably of the same age, I am in agreement with Mr. Brock. The point is, however, what is that age? The more general view of the Continental antiquaries is that they are not Roman, or even if Roman, of a date long after the period of the Romans leaving Britain. We are in a far better position for discussing the age of the bastions built on the outside of the Roman wall of London, since we have the full details respecting them furnished by Mr. J. E. Price, who was deputed by the Corporation of London to undertake the work. These bastions, it should be understood, were semicircular erections, built on the outer side of the Roman wall, which was constructed, after the usual fashion, of small stones and bounding courses of brick. As showing the likeness of the bastions to our own wall I cannot do better than quote from Mr. Price's report on a bastion of London wall: ¹ "This structure was entirely composed of materials collected through the destruction of ancient monuments. No less than forty cartloads of sculptured stones were removed, which varied in size from two to five superficial feet; several were even larger, and comprised for the most part sepulchral memorials, fragments of tombs and inscriptions, mouldings of varied patterns, pilasters, and capitals." The above, word for word, aptly describes what was found in our north wall.

THE POST-ROMAN AGE OF NORTH WALL AND SIMILAR WALLS ELSEWHERE.

The report then continues: ²"It was at the foundation of the structure that evidence appeared of the

¹ J. E. Price, *On a Bastion of London Wall*, p. 23.

² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

post-Roman date to which the erection of the bastion belonged. Beneath the lowest bed of stone, and near to the centre of the structure, a portion of green glazed pottery was found; the ware (to say nothing of the glaze with which it was coated) was sufficient to indicate that neither the pottery, nor the bastion beneath which it was found, could be attributed to the Roman age." Further on Mr. Price speaks of a Roman sepulchral monument, which, ¹"falling into decay, became a suitable quarry for mediæval builders, providing them with convenient materials for the erection of a structure requiring such solidity and strength as would a bastion to the city wall. The size of the stones and their enormous weight show them to have been close at hand." Mr. Price adds: ²"This bastion, like its companion at Tower Hill may have been constructed as late as the thirteenth century, perhaps a portion of those substantial repairs said to have been effected by Henry III." Mr. Price expressly alludes to these facts, "because," as he says, ³"the published reports which have appeared of our discoveries speak of both the bastion and the wall as belonging to Roman times, while, as I venture to think, the evidence goes far to prove that the former was an addition, erected, if not as late as the middle ages, at a time long subsequent to the occupation by the Romans, and that the wall itself must no longer be assigned to a period so remote." Mr. Brock refers to the fact that Mr. Price examined these bastions, but he does not mention the facts adduced by Mr. Price. I have endeavoured to supply the omission. It is important to note—first, the identity in composition and construction between the London bastions and the north wall of Chester, and the almost absolute

¹ J. E. Price, *On a Bastion of London Wall*, p. 90.

² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

certainly that the age of the former is Edwardian, to which period I would assign the building of the north wall. Secondly, the finding of green glazed pottery beneath the bastions. In Chester we have found yellow ware and Jacobean tobacco pipes near the base of the wall. This evidence is important. If the wall is Roman a variety of articles are sure to be found, such as coins, fragments of glass, pottery, iron, &c., of a contemporaneous age. The late excavations have laid bare a considerable space around the wall. This, according to the surveyor's report, is what was found: ¹“a very small quantity of tile fragments, but coins, pottery, or other relics were remarkably distinguished by their absence.” Sir Henry Dryden also remarks on this point: ²“No mortar, Roman or mediæval, no pottery, no coins, no iron remains were found.” Now, in Gloucester an excavation was made down to the base of the Roman wall, with the result “that all along the lower part of the wall a continuous heap of Roman pottery, Roman bone pins, and Roman remains of all kinds were found.”³ Now, Deva was a more important Roman station than Glevum, and hence in a similar position Roman relics should at least be as abundant. Instead of that, we are told such are conspicuous by their absence. Why, we ask, are these Roman relics absent? The answer is, because it is not the Roman wall that we have to do with at Chester. To revert back to the stones for a moment, we have brought forward evidence to show that the occurrence of undoubted Roman stones in a wall is far from being conclusive on the point that the wall is necessarily of Roman age or Roman construction.

¹ *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 3.

² *Letters in Academy*, Oct. 1, 1887.

³ *Bellews' Roman Wall of Gloucester*, p. 158.

MR. ROACH SMITH AND OTHERS ON THE AGE OF
THE NORTH WALL.

In a full review of the character of Roman work Mr. Roach Smith thus sums up his reviews as to the north wall: ¹“We may therefore look upon what is left of the walls of Chester as affording an example of civic fortification, not exceeded in antiquity by that of any Roman remains in this country.” As marking the time when this discovery as to the age of the wall was made, we are further told that if “Roman work had been suspected to exist in the Chester city walls, it has never before (*i.e.*, prior to 1849) been verified.”² In 1872 we have Wright re-echoing the opinion. He says: ³“We seem to have sufficient reason for considering the remains of the walls of Roman Deva, as examples of the earliest style of masonry used by the Romans in their walls of defence in this island.” Another antiquarian authority, J. E. Price, in 1880, writes thus: “In this country the use of an ashlar facing of stone and tile is all but universal, and in comparing works still standing at Colchester, Verulam, York, Lincoln, Porchester, Pevensey, Richborough, Lymme, Leicester, Silchester, Wroxeter, and elsewhere, it will be observed that, while the materials selected are those locally accessible, the form and style adopted is uniform throughout. It is, however, not met with at all in Chester, where the walls are of high antiquity.”⁴ One important piece of evidence brought to light by the late openings in the wall is that it contains Roman monuments of the second or third century. Now,

¹ *Collectanea Antiqua*, vol. vi., p. 43.

² *Journal Archaeological Association*, vol. v., pp. 211, 212.

³ Wright's *Uriconium*, p. 91.

⁴ J. E. Price, *On a Bastion of London Wall*, 1880, p. 1.

considering that the Romans were in Chester as early as 48 A.D., and since it is obvious that the wall cannot be older than its contents, it follows that instead of being an example of the earliest Roman work in this country it must, if Roman at all, belong to the latest. It must, in fact, be post-Roman, since there are moulded stones which show the weathering of three or four centuries before having been placed in the wall, pointing to a time long after the Roman occupation. We can, therefore, understand why it is that the so-called Roman masonry in the wall is unlike any other Roman work in England. In the quotations given above, the north wall is described as an example of the earliest Roman work in England. But this view of late seems to have become untenable, since Mr. Brock now states that it represents an extension of the Roman castra in later Roman times.¹ The older antiquaries saw only the outside of the wall, and conjectured that in the large stones they saw an approach to the massive stones used in Roman buildings on the Continent some centuries prior; and hence concluded that it was allied to that early work. Now, those who abandon this view, and assign a late date to the wall, come into conflict with serious matters of fact. Roman work after the first or second century of Roman rule in Britain began to show signs of deterioration. This is very marked in the later wall work—the lettering of inscriptions, the sculptures, the pottery, and notably the coins. To assign the north wall, which has been compared to some of the finest mural work on the Continent, to this later and decaying age of Roman art, is to the wall at any rate not flattering. Since the above was written Mr. Roach Smith has written stating that he now believes the wall to be “of comparatively late,

¹ *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 53.

instead of an early origin, as he once imagined.”¹ As I have shown above, it matters little whether an early or a late Roman date is assigned, whether it be referred to the higher or lower empire, since the main features of the wall are not in harmony with either of the periods mentioned.

CHANCELLOR FERGUSON'S COMPARISON.

In the report of his opening address last year to the Section of Architecture at the Leamington meeting of the Archæological Institute,² Chancellor Ferguson gives in parallel columns a very impartial review of the more salient points in this controversy, as gathered from published accounts by Sir James Picton and myself. The Chancellor rightly says that under some heads the two accounts are very hard to reconcile. This is only likely to be the case when I explain that Sir James Picton wrote of what was seen in the course of the explorations made in 1887 and 1888, whereas my statements were based upon trifling excavations made in 1883 and 1884. The earlier excavation on the inside of the wall was carried out by Dean Howson at a trifling cost, whereas the later sections seen by Sir James Picton cost £120, raised by public subscription. It is evident that my description of what was seen in 1883 did not necessarily apply to the openings of 1888; the more so as the latter were not made at the same spot. At no point were the excavations more successful than were those made on the Roodeye. The several courses of stone there brought to light for the first time, seem to have convinced Chancellor Ferguson and Sir James Picton that what we have

¹ *Antiquary*, February, 1889.

² Opening Address, Section of Architecture, *Journal Archæological Institute*, 1888.

there is the remains of a Roman landing-place before the retiring of the Dee. To this view of the case I see no objection. It is probably correct. My objection all along has been that it was no part of the wall of the Devan castra, as asserted by some.

WHAT HAS BECOME OF ROMAN DEVA?

A few years ago, if asked what relics we had in Chester belonging to Deva, we could only point to a few stones, which might all have been placed on a table, while fifty years ago a cupboard would have held all our Roman remains. So few, indeed, were the tangible proofs of the Roman occupation that a stranger might well have called in question the received opinion that Chester was a leading Roman station. It is only within the last five years that we have found where and to what extent these remains are to be met with. Mr. Brock brings this out when he tells us ¹“I have taken the cubic contents of the stones acknowledged to be Roman in the length of wall from the Northgate to the Phœnix Tower. There is sufficient to build a tower as high as that of your Cathedral and fourteen feet square, solid.” In addition to this section, there are two others of the same length. I allude to the length of wall from the Phœnix Tower to the Eastgate, and from the Northgate to Morgan’s Mount. So that we have of admittedly Roman stones now existing in our walls a sufficient quantity to construct three solid towers, fourteen feet square, and as high as the Cathedral tower, namely, one hundred and forty feet; or we can have, if it were an architectural possibility, a solid square tower of fourteen feet, and four hundred and twenty feet high. This amount of material would be sufficient to erect a series of buildings

¹ *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 50.

along at least one side of Bridge-street. Again, we have found, from a comparatively small opening in half a mile of wall, fragments of cornices of different patterns, which must have formed part of ten or twelve large buildings. To judge from the size of the stone, they indicate a style of structure not inferior to existing public buildings in Chester, except as to height. What revelations, as to the temples and other buildings might we not expect to obtain from the rest of the wall if similarly explored? If twenty-five feet of walling have given us one hundred and thirty-eight Roman worked stones, what might we expect from the two thousand or more feet yet to be uncovered? It is evident that we have in the walls, at the points mentioned, a large part of the best buildings in Roman Deva. In this way we have worked out the question, what has become of Roman Deva? The walls for us are a record office, in which is preserved the story of the builders and buildings, so far as we may gather it from commemorative tablets, altars to strange divinities, sepulchral inscriptions, &c., &c. In short, the history of Deva and its people for two or three centuries, so far as can be gathered from such relics, is contained in the walls, and only await examination to fill up what is at present a blank in our early history.

SECTIONS AND MAPS OF THE WALL.

The first sketch of the wall given in vol. ii. of the Society's *Journal*, and in *Roman Remains in Chester*, we are told, is from an "original drawing," which I may add was used by Mr. Brock to illustrate his paper on the walls. I pointed out its inaccuracies at the time,¹ which was confirmed by gentlemen present.² It subsequently transpired that the

¹ *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 86.

² *Ibid.*, p. 88.

drawing in question was executed some months before the opening described by Mr. Brock was made in the walls. Further, we notice that it is a "diagrammatic section," and therefore not an accurate representation of the details of the wall, such as the size and order of the stone, &c. Again, ¹"it is plotted from dimensions taken at various points," and consequently is not a true section of the wall, at any one given point. It is a misfortune that we have not a real section to refer to, since both drawings are "diagrammatic." Or better still, that photography was not brought into use. I would further point out that the first section drawing shows the stones of any particular course to be all of the same thickness, while in the map there are nine courses, in which two stones are needed to make up the requisite thickness. This is not shown on either of the sections of the wall. In the catalogue of stones found, given in the above volumes, there are seven large stones, including cornices, and two inscribed stones, said to have been found in no regular course. This irregular course is not shown on either of the sections. The first and third section of the wall show twenty courses of stone; the map twenty-one courses. In both sections the stones are shown as evenly squared and placed in regular position. Sir James Picton says of eleven feet of the wall shown on the section, ²"That the stones have been thrown in promiscuously without any order or attempt at bedding." These very irregular courses of stone do not appear on either of the sections. The size of some of the stones now in the Museum does not agree with the size of the course from which they came—as given on the first

¹ *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., section facing p. 1.

² Presidential Address, *British Archaeological Association*, p. 28.

section. For instance, some of the stones are deeper than the course, while others are half the thickness. Much of the misconception which has arisen as to the age of the wall is due to the wrong impression of its construction conveyed by these maps. Of the leading one it is sufficient condemnation of it to say that it was in existence months before the section dealt with by Mr. Brock was opened in the wall.

THAT THE NORTH WALL WAS CONSTRUCTED BY THE
ROMANS IS NOT TENABLE.

So far as the north wall is concerned, it is claimed for it by Mr. Brock and others that it was constructed by the Romans.¹ Let us see what this position involves? It means no less than that Roman hands must have pulled down important edifices—it may have been the Prætorium, the Basilica, or Baths, and we know not what—and afterwards placed the materials where we now find them in the walls. Is it reasonable to suppose that the Romans would be guilty of such folly? Some of these buildings did not fall by natural decay, judging by the condition of the stones. These buildings were essential to the efficient maintenance of the civic and military life of Deva. Such an act of destruction would be intelligible if the position were about to be evacuated, but in that case there would be no motive for the erection of the wall by the Romans. Again, assuming that the walls were built by the Romans, we cannot understand why they should have sacrificed their public buildings to its erection when the same kind of stone was cropping out in various places, nowhere more than two feet below the surface, yielding an unlimited supply of building stone. History records no event calling

¹ *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 52.

for this sacrifice from the Roman army of occupation. Advocates of the Roman origin of the walls must remember that in addition to imputing to the Romans almost unaccountable folly, there is also a further charge of barbarism, as shown in the mutilation of the sepulchral monuments, knocking off the heads of figures, and otherwise defacing the features. The truth concerning these Roman stones would seem to be, that after the devastation of the Britons, Danes, and Saxons, of which we have heard, the ruins of Deva became covered up and hidden away, until some great building era in the middle ages when the stones were utilised in the way described.

THE NORTH WALL REALLY OF EDWARDIAN AGE.

It now only remains to mention the evidence in favour of the Edwardian age of the north wall. First of all, we have the notice of Ralph Higden, our local chronicler in the time of Edward I., who writes of the ruined material then to be seen in and about the city, similar to the contents of the wall, as including, "huge stones engraven with the names of ancient famous persons," which aptly describes the Roman sepulchral stones, and he adds, "when I beheld the groundwork of buildings in the streets, laid with strong huge stones, it seemeth that it hath been founded by the painful labours of Romans, or giants." This would correctly describe the Roman buildings which we know existed in Bridge Street. This evidence shows that prior to the thirteenth century there was still remaining in Chester, plenty of unused Roman stone work. The question is, was it made use of in the way suggested? Let us look at the surrounding circumstances. Edward I.'s reign was a remarkable one. His influence was more felt in this district than in any other part of England. He was in Chester in the years 1275, 1277, 1278, 1281, 1282, 1283,

1284, 1285, 1295, and 1300, staying often for weeks when organising his expeditions into Wales. During this period, to consolidate his power, he built hereabouts the Castles of Holt, Ewloe, Hawarden, Flint, Rhuddlan, Denbigh, Conway, and Caernarvon, made roads, and made good the defences of the city, including the castle and walls with their seventeen circular towers. As the base line of his operations in Wales, he could do nothing less than see that Chester was in a perfect state of defence. According to Sir Gilbert Scott, it was not only castles, but cathedrals, as Chester and Bangor, that were greatly indebted to him.

In building his castles, Edward adopted at Caernarvon the plan of using the material from the Roman station of Segontium, close by. At Conway the Roman station of Conovium was dismantled to build Aberconway. The same doubtless went on at Flint, and at Rhuddlan also, and contributed in all probability to the disappearance of the Roman station of Varis. At Chester I maintain that the same course was pursued; the Norman wall was then decaying, and on the north and east face required renewing, and for the speedy accomplishment of the work of repair, old material, rather than new, was employed, and the remaining Roman ruins and cemeteries were laid under tribute to furnish the stones. The action I have suggested on the part of Edward is probable and natural. That he would have occupied in force all other strategetic points, and neglected his base seems incredible. It is true that we are not able to produce the account, showing the amount expended at this time on the repairs of the wall, since the civic murage books, dealing with the matter, only commence with the seventeenth and eighteenth years of Edward IV. = 1478 and 1479. That it was repaired is proved beyond doubt by the existing remains of Edwardian work in the walls. Indeed, Mr. Brock

admits the existence of Edwardian work¹ "in the whole of the wall from the large unmortared stones to the parapet," and he has figured a stone with a distinct mason's mark of Edwardian date.² How these undoubted Edwardian stones came to be found in a wall which is claimed to be "Roman in date from base to summit"³ is a serious difficulty, unless upon the assumption that the wall is of Edwardian age. The wall cannot be older than its youngest fragments. Other observers have noticed stones from the wall with mouldings of a mediæval type. There is further the evidence of Braun's map of Chester in Elizabeth's reign, showing the walls, towers, and castle, all restored after the most approved Edwardian type. The north wall in this map is shown as having no less than seven circular towers along its front. Until it can be shown that this map is not trustworthy, I shall hold the case to be proved that Edward I. did in his time have the city walls, and in particular the north wall, put into a state of efficient repair. It would be easy to show that in the revival of building at this period, the re-use of Roman stones was common enough in all parts of the country. We find them in churches, and bridges, and farm-houses in the vicinity of Roman stations. At Bath, a Roman town, there was a wall built up similarly to our north wall, of Roman monuments, and building stones, but the historians of Bath have wisely made no claim for the same being Roman. Ralph Higden, in his day, could not fail to see the Roman foundations on the east side of Bridge Street. When the site was cleared in 1864 it was instructive to notice, that all that remained consisted of some twenty stone columns and bases. All the plain stones, and all that could be utilised to construct a wall

¹ *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 94.

² *Ibid.*, p. 40, plate.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

had disappeared. No fragments of columns were found in the north wall. Hence it would seem not unlikely that the Roman buildings in Bridge Street contributed their quota of material to rebuild the north wall in the thirteenth century.

RESUMÉ OF THE POSITION.

We have now concluded our examination of the arguments recently brought forward concerning the north wall. We have had before us all that could be urged in favour of the walls being Roman, in the sense of the present stones having been laid in their present position by Roman hands. I leave others to judge whether that position can be said to have been proved or rendered probable. Let me recall some of the points which I think have been established. We started with the admission that the wall was unlike any other wall in England; we have also seen that it is unlike any admittedly Roman work in England, while it is very similar to local mediæval work. We have also seen that the inclusion on so large a scale of Roman tombstones is unparalleled by any work of the age alleged. No work of a like character can be found in the first four centuries of the Christian era, while from the middle ages down to the nineteenth century the re-use of Roman material has been going on. Further, a long stretch of wall twenty feet high, with earth as a substitute for mortar, and held together by an earthen bank in the rear of fifteen feet, can have no claim to be considered of Roman construction. In its composition it is more nearly allied to the rubble walls of the Cathedral. Then there is the stone itself, which beyond question is local, and very perishable. We have no walling in Chester that has existed five hundred years without repair. The recent repairs at the walls would go to show that it too had

reached the extent of its endurance, some five hundred years. We have brought forward evidence to show that Chester has had a Roman, Saxon, Norman, and Edwardian wall, and that what is now found sometimes above, and sometimes below, the surface is the base of the Edwardian wall. The wall, in fact, has not a single distinctive Roman feature, and no valid grounds have been brought forward for disturbing the view held by local antiquaries for so many generations, that no part of the Roman wall is to be seen above ground, and that much of what is now visible in the older parts of the wall is of Edwardian age.

