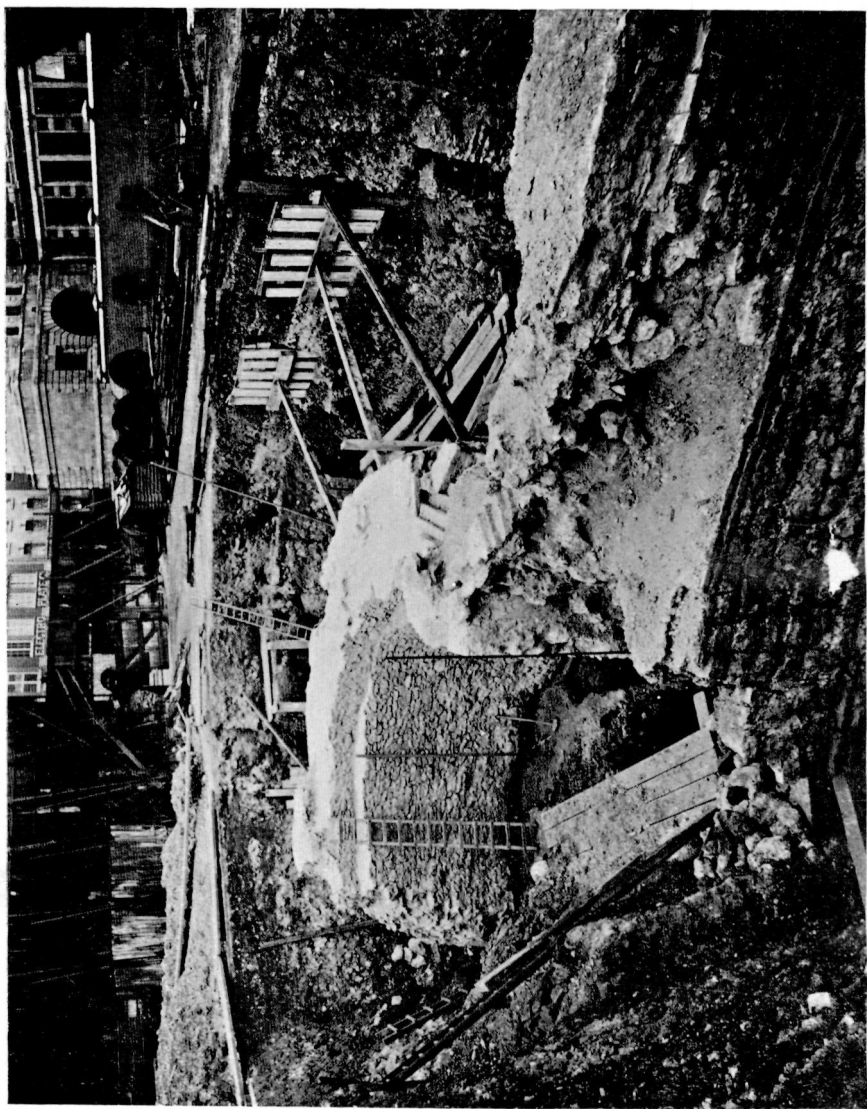


ROMAN WALL AND BASTION, NEWGATE STREET.
 PLAN SHOWING G.P.O. COURTYARD AND POSITION OF THE RECENT
 DISCOVERIES, WITH LINE OF WALL EASTWARD.



THE ROMAN WALL AND BASTION, NEWGATE STREET, AS FIRST UNCOVERED.

THE BASTION OF THE ROMAN WALL AT NEWGATE STREET.

Given at the Society's Meeting, October 30, 1909.

By PHILIP NORMAN, Esq., LL.D.,
Treasurer of the Society of Antiquaries.

IT was expected that the preparation for the buildings added to the General Post Office and St. Bartholomew's Hospital, which now largely cover the site of Christ's Hospital, would bring to light traces of the Roman City wall, of which it was known that a long stretch had passed through the precinct. This surmise has been fully confirmed during the recent excavations, the Roman ground level being from 10 feet to 12 feet below the present surface, and, as was anticipated, the lower parts of two bastions attached to the outer side of the wall also came to light. Unfortunately, owing to the exigencies of the building operations, they had to be destroyed very rapidly, though not before considerable record of them in the shape of photographs and measurements had been obtained. There remains, however, an open space between the new buildings and Giltspur Street, which will not be utilised, save as a yard, for some years, and it was felt that here was a unique opportunity of examining anything that might remain below ground of an angle bastion which was known to have existed in the seventeenth century, forming as it does a conspicuous object in maps and plans of that date. Through the courtesy of H.M. Office of Works, representatives of the Society of

Antiquaries of London had from the first been allowed free access to the site. In the early spring of this year (1909) they applied for and obtained leave to conduct a private excavation for the purpose of finding, if possible, the angle bastion; and this work has been carried out under the management of Mr. Francis W. Reader and myself.

The wall is the most important and definite survival of Roman London. Its line along the land side can clearly be traced, from the Tower of London (east of the White Tower), running almost due north to Aldgate; thence north-west to Bishopsgate, and west along the street called London Wall, where in the churchyard of St. Giles, Cripplegate, the upper part of a bastion is still to be seen above ground. The wall then takes a sudden turn to the south, to a point a little east of the site of Aldersgate. Again turning west, it crosses the street at Aldersgate and passes along the south side of the disused burial ground, now generally known as the "Postmen's Park," a portion of the inner face still being visible in the basement of the General Post Office, which forms the southern boundary of the churchyard. The course of the wall thence is continued in a westerly direction to the angle bastion that has now been excavated. Here, curving abruptly to the south, it passes on to Newgate and to Ludgate, whence its further direction is uncertain. Along the south or river front remains of a wall have been found of a different construction, and, although Roman, apparently of a later date than that on the land side with which we are familiar.

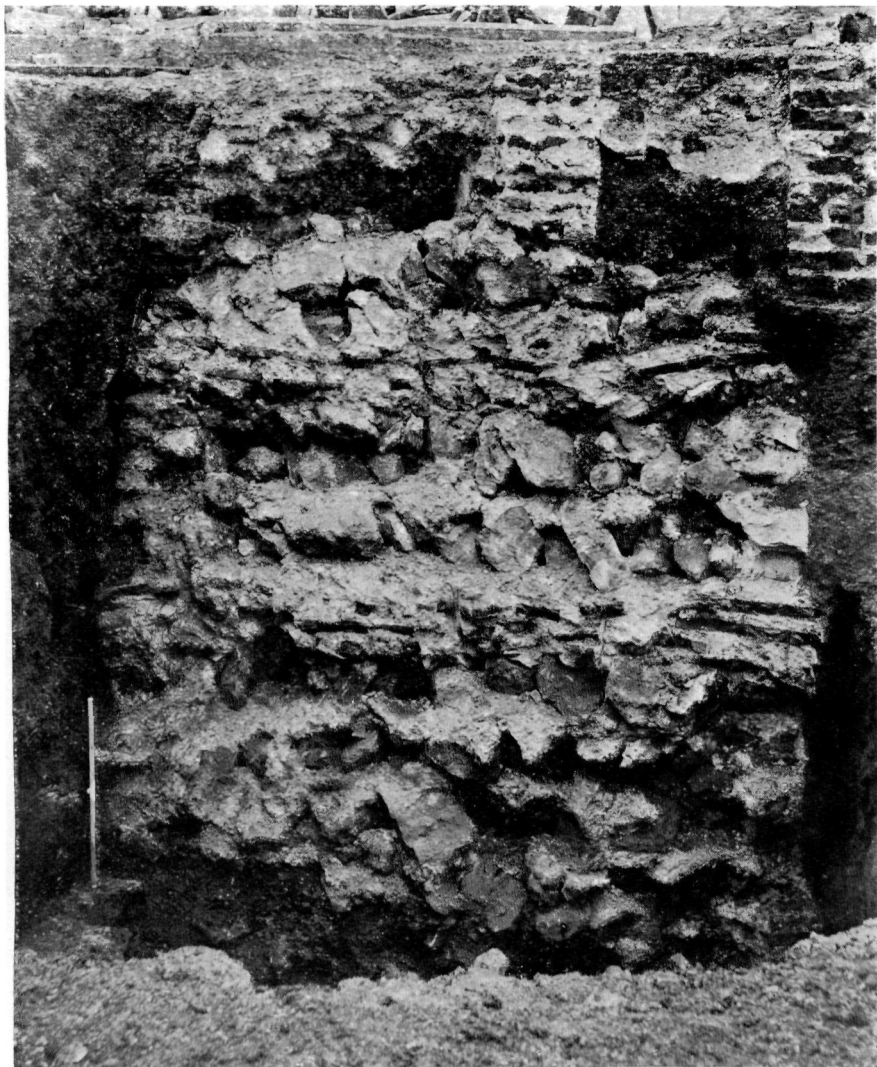
Additional strength was given to the wall by the erection of a number of projecting towers or bastions,

a usual adjunct of later Roman mural defences. Their ground-plan was mostly of horseshoe form. The existence of a rectangular bastion has been alleged; but the only pictorial record of it is a slight sketch made by Gough in the eighteenth century, an engraving from a copy of which appears in "Illustrations of Roman London," by Roach Smith, who considered it Roman. On the old maps, however, all the bastions represented are semi-circular or shaped like a horse-shoe. In their method of construction and the material employed these bastions differ greatly from the Roman wall itself, against which they are built without being bonded or tied to it in any way. In several instances fragments of former buildings, sculptured figures, capitals, etc., have been found embedded in their bases. Fragments of Roman tiles also occur, but there are no bonds of tiles such as form a distinct feature in the City wall. A bastion west of Aldersgate was said by the late Mr. G. E. Fox, in 1889, to have had mediæval fragments near its base, but if so they may have been inserted during repairs; another examined more recently, namely, that below the vestry at All Hallows, London Wall, had undoubted proofs of Roman origin. In other cases the evidence points that way, but is more dubious. It therefore seems that while some of the bastions may have been added and others rebuilt in later times, such additions to the defensive wall of the City were originally planned by the Romans.

The remains of the Giltspur Street angle bastion are now exposed before us. Late in the eighteenth century about half of it was destroyed, apparently in the

building of the Giltspur Street Compter (George Dance's), and in 1855 this Compter was taken down and the site added to the grounds of Christ's Hospital.

As you see, the north side of the bastion stands to a considerable height. The small piece of the Roman wall against which it abuts is, as we should expect, of the same character as the rest of the wall which has been examined at so many points on the east, north, and west sides of the City. It has, however, a few slight peculiarities, and in one respect shows a feature which hitherto there has been no opportunity of observing in London. Coming with a curve from the north-east, it has a rounded angle, to which originally, of course, no bastion was attached. The Roman ground level, marked externally by the usual plinth of ferruginous sandstone, is here about 12 feet below the present surface, the wall being a little over 8 feet in thickness at the base. On the inside at the plinth level are three courses of Roman tiles, and above, the wall is built up much as elsewhere with courses of bonding tiles at regular intervals, the remains rising to within 3 feet 9 inches of the present surface. Below the wall there is only a slight layer of rubble foundation grouted with concrete; but below that again the masonry has an unusual feature, being supported by tiers of large ragstones set in clay and carried to a further depth of more than 5 feet, the last foot resting in a trench dug in the natural brick earth, which is here reached more than 17 feet below the present surface. As all the lower part of the soil inside the wall for 8 feet above the Roman ground level contained fragments of Roman pottery and nothing later, it seems clear that here was a hollow



ROMAN WALL : THE END, SHOWING CONSTRUCTION.

place which the Romans filled in when they built the wall.

Inside, the wall was slightly cracked, and leaned over towards the west. The building of the bastion doubtless arrested further mischief, as besides strengthening the defences it served as a buttress.

It is clearly later than the wall, for it is built against it and is not bonded in; its construction, also, is different; and it may be noted that the undoubtedly Roman bastion at All Hallows, London Wall, shared these characteristics.

Its large size agrees with the commanding position. In plan it is somewhat horse-shoe shaped, having a diameter of about 25 feet from its outer edge to the outer edge of the wall. The masonry has no very definite feature, being well laid and brought to more or less of a smooth face, but the ragstones composing it are not generally large, nor are they squared or arranged in regular layers. The mortar is of good quality, rather yellow, and containing sand and pebbles. In the sections, where the south part of the bastion is broken off, we find that the interior is more compact than that of the old wall. At the top are a few courses of masonry which do not fit on to the lower portion, being thinner and built in a more circular form. The wall below is 7 feet 6 inches thick, the addition on the top only 5 feet 8 inches.

The ground outside had been much disturbed to the north; but there were clear indications of water action extending over a lengthened period, and the indications were those not of the existence of a ditch, but of a running stream, which had here taken a turn, slightly impinging on the north side of the bastion. Its

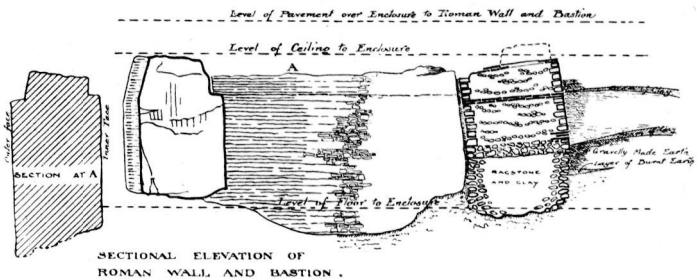
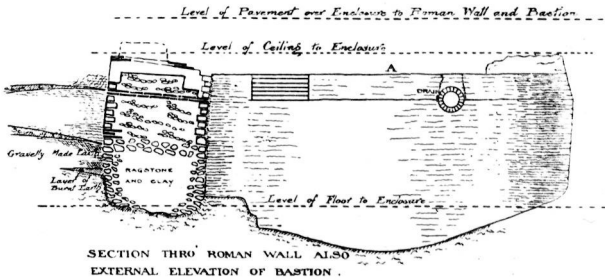
channel was filled with gravel, and at the base lay several pieces of so-called Samian ware.

About the centre of this north side the bastion wall is carried down to a depth of 19 feet 3 inches, sloping up towards the west. Inside, the bastion is hollow. The lower portion appears to have been built round a core of earth deposited in Roman times. Above this, made earth had been thrown in which contained nothing but Roman relics for some height. In this internal portion the masonry is not pointed; it rests on the brick earth, which is found to the north at a depth of 17 feet 3 inches, or 2 feet higher than on the outside, there being within no sign of a stream or ditch. To the south-west the inside and outside of the bastion wall are on the same level.

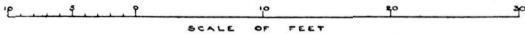
The curved angle should be noted, as it is an important feature here found for the first time in London; and the foundations are also remarkable, as they are unlike any recorded elsewhere.

The bastion is an impressive and picturesque piece of ancient fortification, and I find no reason to doubt that it is Roman.

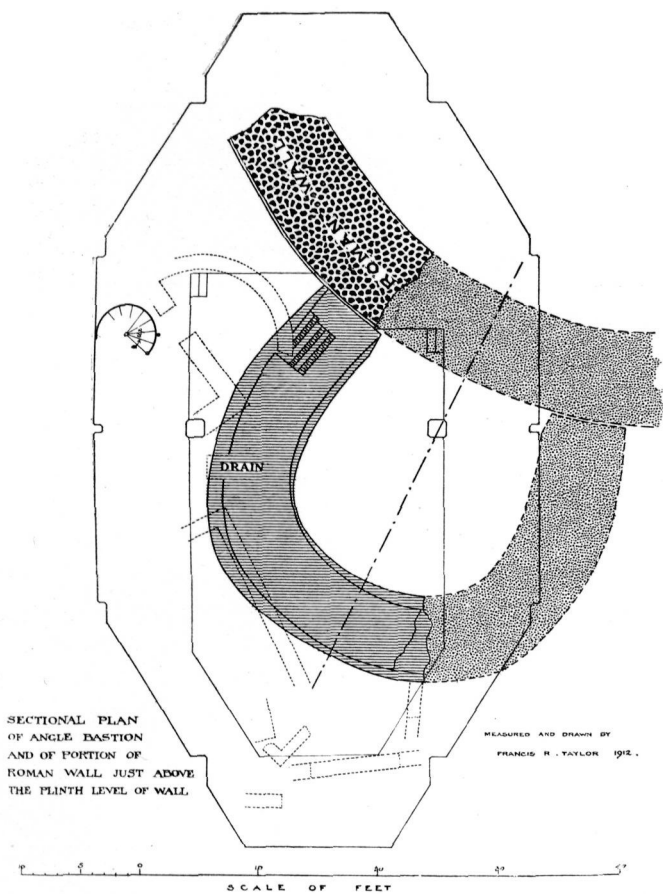
NOTE.—Part of his address given above was embodied in a letter by Mr. Norman which appeared in the "Times" of August 7, 1909. He therein urged that the remains should be saved from destruction, and pointed out that this could be done at small cost. The bastion was shortly afterwards taken over and preserved by the Government. It is now to be seen in a large underground chamber in the centre of the yard, lighted by electricity.—EDITOR.



MEASURED AND DRAWN BY
FRANCIS H. TAYLOR . 1912 .



ROMAN WALL AND BASTION : SECTIONS, ETC.



ROMAN WALL AND BASTION, NEWGATE STREET.
PLAN OF WALL AND BASTION, AND THE UNDERGROUND CHAMBER
NOW ENCLOSING THEM.