

## ROMAN REMAINS: LOMBARD STREET— GRACECHURCH STREET.

BY

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It was confidently anticipated that when the premises of Messrs. Barclays Bank, Limited, at the corner of Lombard Street and Gracechurch Street were demolished for re-building a stretch of Roman walling would be found. Surface indications, the discovery of Roman remains in the immediate vicinity, and general considerations all pointed to the existence below ground of much of interest to the student of Roman London.

Before the buildings were pulled down, our Society, through the good offices of Mr. W. Chas. Edwards, had obtained the kind permission of the Directors of the Bank to inspect the operations as they proceeded. In September, 1925, the remains expected were exhumed and forthwith were photographed. About 15 feet below the street level there were found three blocks or footings of Roman brickwork of which the central one was distinctly T-shaped in plan. The blocks were equally spaced from one another at a distance of 10 feet 6 inches and measured some 2 feet 6 inches in thickness and 5 feet 6 inches in length. Immediately to the south of the blocks at a distance of about 7 feet 6 inches, a length of Roman walling, some 4 feet or 5 feet in thickness, was met with, the walling running at a slight angle to the south facings of the blocks. The general depth of the excavation from the pavement of Lombard Street was 13 feet 8 inches.

Observation of the remains on behalf of our Society had thus proceeded from September and earlier when the public and particularly Londoners were startled by an emphatic pronouncement in *The Daily Mail*, Feb. 3rd, 1926, that the remains had been identified with the Forum of Londinium and that in consequence the exact site of the Forum had been discovered. According to an "Official on the Staff of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments," whose description of the remains appeared in *The Daily Mail*:

"The character and plan of the building is precisely that of the arcaded walks almost invariably surrounding Roman market places and used for the stalls and booths of the merchants. Taken in conjunction with the earlier discovery of the supposed basilica, there is every probability that at last the exact position of the great forum of Londinium has been ascertained."

Prof. Lethaby in the *Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 4th, 1926,

"was inclined to the view that the relics may have formed a portion of the Roman Forum, although the evidence was not entirely convincing."

After an expression of opinion that the remains represented a row of shops fronting on the street he

"came to the conclusion that quite probably the shops were situated on the outside of the south-west corner of the Roman Forum. The shops in that case backed on to the outside wall, and they were probably built with it as a provision for market trade."

Mr. Gordon Home in his *Roman London* [1926], p. 189, illustrates the placing of shop-frontages above the footings.

On the supposition of the Forum having been found, *The Daily Mail*, Feb. 9th, 1926, published a reconstruction of Roman London by Mr. William Walcot, F.R.I.B.A., the eminent artist and classicist. Naturally such a reconstruction did not appeal to every antiquary, for the remains of Roman London are comparatively few while the theories of

antiquaries are as numerous as they are diverse. Mr. Walcot's picture, however, was a serious attempt to portray the Roman City at the height of its prosperity and deserved the attention that it received.

The plan and section which accompany this paper are based upon drawings which Mr. O. Campbell-Jones, A.R.I.B.A., of the firm of architects who designed the new building on the site, kindly lent the writer. In addition, Mr. Quintus Waddington, Assistant Curator of the Guildhall Museum, placed at the disposal of the writer a plan and description of the remains. The plan included the exact position and dimensions of a short run of walling observed by Mr. Waddington in Gracechurch Street. This length Mr. Waddington ingeniously coupled up with a presumed extension of the footings on the site at Lombard Street.

Of the illustrations that accompany this paper, Fig. 1 is a plan of the excavated site with the walling in position; Fig. 1 A a plan of the site showing the walling found in Gracechurch Street and its possible relation to the remains in Lombard Street; and Fig. 2 a section along the line B B of Fig. 1. Of the photographs which were taken for the Society in October and November, 1925, before the excavations were completed, Fig. 3 shows the general appearance of the site at the junction of Gracechurch Street (at the left of the photograph) and Lombard Street. This view also includes remains of a medieval well against Gracechurch Street and the piece of the easternmost footing that had been uncovered at the time when the photograph was taken. To the right, the central of the three footings appears. In Fig. 4, the central footing is shown completely uncovered, the camera being presented to the west. Fig. 5 is the photograph of a short piece of the Roman walling which ran the whole length of the site below the pavement of Lombard Street and which, in both directions, extended into property that was not excavated. The piece of walling in the photo-

graph was that situated near the west end of the site. On the left of the same Fig. 5, there also appears a bank of earth which, lying at right angles to the face of the wall, had not been excavated when the photograph was taken. Fig. 6 is a photograph of the extension of the walling to the right, i.e., the west. It also shows a cutting-down into the walling for the insertion of a drain-pipe as well as the cutting-back of the walling, a cutting-back which took place during the excavation of the site. This cutting-back was subsequently continued along the whole length of the exposed face of the walling in order to accommodate the south wall of the underground portion of the new building. In Fig. 7 is seen the medieval well and a piece of the footing situated at the south east corner of the site.

An inspection of the Figures clearly indicates the construction and material of the remains and moreover shows how the facings of the remains were not parallel to each other nor exactly parallel to the line of Lombard Street.

Mr. Waddington's note of the footings is as follows:—

“The two [blocks of Roman brickwork] of which the complete plan was preserved were 5 feet 6 inches long by 2 feet 8 inches wide, and the third, of which only the western end remained, was apparently of the same dimensions. Each block consisted of six courses of Roman bricks. The bricks measured either 17 inches by  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches by  $11\frac{3}{4}$  inches or  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches by  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches by  $11\frac{3}{4}$  inches, so that with the mortar five courses were just about a foot in height. The long sides of the three blocks were aligned approximately with the present course of Lombard Street, the south-western corner of the most easterly block being six feet back from the new building line of the street, while the corresponding corner of the westernly block was only just over three feet behind the same line. The bricks rested on a foundation of concrete, consisting of stone and lime mortar, sixteen feet below the level of the present street. The operation in progress did

not reveal to what depth this foundation went. From the northern face of the central block, projected the beginning of a wall, also of brick, one foot ten inches thick. No similar wall was found running from the western block, but the ground here had been much disturbed, and not enough of the eastern remained to show whether or not it had had a corresponding wall."

The exact situation of the footings under the new building has been recorded by the Directors of Barclays Bank by the placing of Roman bricks from the site in the floor of the Strong Room immediately above the footings.

Of the remains observed in Gracechurch Street, the position of which has been drawn on the plan, Fig. 1 A, Mr. Waddington writes:—

"A small tunnel, however, which was made from the north-eastern corner of the site under Gracechurch Street at the same level cut through a wall, two feet thick, built of concrete with courses of bonding tiles. This wall was covered on both sides with a thick coating of white plaster, and this again with a thinner layer of a brownish plaster, coloured and polished, red on one face of the wall and green on the other, so that it was evidently an inside wall."

The presumed continuation of this wall with presumed remains of another footing below Gracechurch Street is also indicated on the plan, Fig. 1 A.

As regards the identification of the remains, Mr. Walter G. Bell well summed up the position when he wrote:—

"What now has been found may be a fragment of the Forum wall and its sheltered arcade. It may be that or half a dozen other things. It may be a portion of a row of shops in Roman Lombard Street, outside the Forum wall. It may be a gateway, not necessarily of a public building. It may be a part of some inconspicuous person's house. There is ample room for speculation." (*The Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 4th, 1926.)

Although the remains under discussion may not themselves be of prime importance, yet when correlated with other known remains and remains still to be found and recorded, they may aid materially in that much-to-be-desired reconstruction of the plan of Roman London with its blocks of houses, its run of streets, and its situation of the chief buildings.

Mr. W. Chas. Edwards writes concerning the discovery of the remains that:

“ After plotting the various walls found in the vicinity, I formed a theory that the Romans upon capturing London had constructed their camp upon Cornhill; that, later on, this camp had been surrounded with a 59 inch wall; and that each of its four sides measured 200 paces. I measured it out and found that the distance from a point inside Leadenhall Market, shown in Mr. Hodges’ sketches, was about 200 paces, and that from the wall at the junction of Lombard Street and Gracechurch Street to the wall at the north end of Gracechurch Street was 200 paces. From that point to about Birchin Lane the distance was also about 200 paces, but from a point in the south-west of Lombard Street to Cornhill it was only about 180 paces. The direction of the wall under St. Peter’s Church brought the square correct and complete. I therefore concluded that at the corner of Lombard Street there would be found at moderate depth an important Roman wall. This was confirmed by noting that at this point there was a straight building line in a street that is almost a segment of an arc. The Society thereupon informed the Directors of Barclays Bank that Roman remains might be encountered when the old premises were demolished. This proved to be the case. The remains that were found have been variously judged to be entrances to houses, or to shops; but in my opinion, they formed a portion of a gateway.

The bricks were large and the mortar very red, indicating that probably in the building of this gateway other