

ROMAN LONDON ; BROOK'S YARD ;
 ST. MARY'S CHURCHYARD ;
 TEST-BORING FOR ST. PAUL'S.

THE following is quoted from *St. Nicholas Notes* for 1926, by the kind permission of the Rev. Wm. C. Piercy, Rector of St. Nicholas Cole Abbey, Queen Victoria Street:—

“ This hitherto little known green oasis in the drabness of Upper Thames Street has come into considerable prominence lately. A memorial stone has been erected which (to many for the first time) makes known which is the remnant of the Churchyard of St. Peter's, Paul's Wharf, and records a most interesting historic fact, already explained more fully in “ *Notes*,” for all time. The inscription reads thus: In this Church, when the use of the Book of Common Prayer was forbidden under penalties by the usurper Cromwell, its services were regularly used throughout the period of oppression by the Rev. Thomas Morson and others. “ January 25th, 1649. I heard the Common Prayer (a rare thing in these days) in St. Peter's at Paul's Wharf, London,”—John Evelyn's Diary.

Just at the time that this was being planned, the Rector received a request from the authorities of St. Paul's Cathedral to allow a test-boring in a corner of the churchyard in connection with the collecting of technical evidence as to the safety of the Cathedral, especially in view of the proposed bridge; a similar boring having also been made in the courtyard of the Heralds' College. Here is the very interesting point; it seems pretty certain that the double retaining wall of Roman date that has been found recently in Brook's Yard, and of which evidence exists elsewhere, and which forms the fourth (or river) side of the City walls, the

very existence of which fourth wall was till recent years questioned, was struck again here. Geographically, the boring was made on the line where this would be expected to be found; the workmen had to make in a very small area some half-dozen vain attempts with a rod before getting any boring at all; in the centre of these trial points the boring was eventually found possible. This, and the position of these " trials " seem to fit exactly with the assumption that the failures all struck the double wall itself, and that the successful boring was managed *between* the two walls. This is corroborated by the finding of the " plastic chalk." Chalk is, of course, not found in the London sub-soil, and being, as we should untechnically call it, " puddled," it was obviously placed there in the course of some constructive work. The timber which followed seemed to make our theory certain, for elsewhere the double wall has been found to be joined by heavy baulks of timber. . . ."

The above account must be taken as only a rough one, even the depths are merely from casual observation and memory, and may be found inexact." (*St. Nicholas Notes*, Oct. 1926).

As regards the occurrence of Roman Walling in this vicinity, we may remind Members of the Society that Mr. Gordon Home in his *Roman London* gives a plan and section, drawn from a plan at the Guildhall Museum, of the two Roman walls found in Brook's Yard, Upper Thames Street (p. 176) and says:

" At Brook's Yard on the north side of Upper Thames Street, a remarkable section has recently come to light. Within the outer wall, at a distance of 15 feet, is a second wall built in somewhat the same manner, but only 5 feet thick. The careful elaboration of the foundations would indicate that it was intended to be carried to a considerable height. As this inner wall has up to the present time been discovered in this one spot only, it is obviously unwise to generalise upon it."

Roach Smith wrote as regards the Thames-side walling in the immediate neighbourhood:—

“ . . . The workmen employed in excavating for sewerage in Upper Thames Street advanced without impediment from Blackfriars to the foot of Lambeth Hill, where they were obstructed by the remains of a wall of extraordinary strength which formed an angle at Lambeth Hill and Thames Street. It was built upon oaken piles, over which was laid a stratum of chalk and stones and upon this a course of hewn sandstones, each measuring from three to four feet, by two, and two and a half feet, cemented with the well-known compound of quick lime, sand, and pounded tile. Upon this solid sub-structure was laid the body of the wall formed of rag-stone, flint, and lime, bonded at intervals with courses of plain and curved-edged tiles. . . .” (*Illustrations of Roman London*, pp. 18-19).

Now if a line is drawn from the angle in the latest Roman Wall that engirt the City—the angle against Aldersgate—until it strikes Brook’s Yard on the south, it will be seen to pass down the greater length of Old Change, a position in which one would expect to find the run of the Roman fortification before that part of the City was enclosed where St. Paul’s subsequently stood. May not the remains discovered in Brook’s Yard have some relation to the probable run of the wall down Old Change as has been surmised by Mr. W. Chas. Edwards? It is possible too that, in the remark of Roach Smith concerning walling “which formed an angle at Lambeth Hill and Thames Street,” Roach Smith was referring to the obscure Brook’s Yard, which lies but a few feet to the east from one branch of the present Lambeth Hill, and not to Lambeth Hill itself.

Further particulars of the boring in St. Peter’s Churchyard are quoted from the December issue of *St. Nicholas Notes* as follows:—

“The S. Paul’s Surveyor’s Office wrote on October 1st of “the test bore hole which you kindly permitted us to make in

St. Peter's Churchyard," with evident disappointment from their own point of view, which was not, of course, the archaeological point of view which makes it of such interest to ourselves. "The results were interesting, but not of great value to us," say they, "as the borers came across what appeared to be a part of an old Roman wall and did not find any water above the London clay. . . ." We will first give the exact particulars of the diagram and then discuss further the borers' report and the conclusions to be drawn.

The total boring was to a depth of 30 feet. The first 6 feet was "made-up ground," then came 1 foot of marl, then 8 feet of "chalk," i.e., the puddled chalk of which we spoke in October, then 1 foot described as "sand and chalk," followed by 1 foot of "alluvial mud," then the 2 feet of timber resting directly on the blue clay, which was pierced to a depth of 11 feet, at which point (making the total of 30 feet) the bore was abandoned. The diagram has the footnote, "Water level: nil." The "brown clay" we saw and mentioned does not here appear, it is presumably included in the "blue clay," and was probably very thin; and our previous statement that "the blue clay was reached at a slightly lower depth than usual" seems to need withdrawal. (As we said, we wrote before the final results were before us).

At this point we will insert the borers' remarks on the result. "The true sequence of the strata was not available until the 16 foot level [even that does not allow for the timber, or this would read 19 foot.—ED., S.N.N.] was reached, the chalk, etc., found above this level evidently having been 'shot' there at some time or other, probably for filling-in purposes, or, as timber was found between 17-19 feet, this (timber) may be from an old barge sunk or stranded there in years gone by, possibly laden with the chalk mentioned above. At a depth of 5 feet 6 inches a very hard obstruction was noticed, the nature of this being, of course, unknown. Also at several points, within a radius of about 6 feet, where a prodding rod was tried, we were

unable to get lower than 7 feet, coming presumably on this or similar obstruction. Yours faithfully, Duke and Ockenden."

The ingenious suggestion of the "barge" is new and interesting. But, in the Editor's opinion [*i.e.* Editor of *St. Nicholas Notes*], it may definitely be dismissed for the following, amongst other less important, reasons: (*a*) Two feet seems an excessive thickness for a barge, unless the actual keel was struck and pierced throughout its depth; (*b*) the facts fit so very exactly with the alternate suggestion of the "filling-in" between the two walls and the timber known elsewhere to be used between them, which we set forth in Oct.; but, to our mind most conclusive of all, when taken in connection with (*b*), it seems (*c*) impossible that a barge should have been laden with a foot of "alluvial mud," and then some sand before its cargo of chalk was placed in it!

We fall back therefore, unhesitatingly, upon the theory previously advanced by us, and supported as it is by the last paragraph of the above report." [End of quotation].
