

## ROMAN LONDON ; CORNHILL.

(January 25th, 1922, at the invitation of Mr. William C. Edwards, Mr Cator, F.S.A. also being present).

BY

WILLIAM MARTIN, F.S.A.

ON the north side of the church of St. Peter, Cornhill, and adjacent to the porch of the church which opens to Cornhill, the premises known as Nos. 56 and 57, Cornhill, together with the adjacent house, had been demolished and the site excavated to a depth of some 9 feet 6 inches. The footing of the north wall of the church was laid bare at the same time and a short length of Roman walling uncovered, approximately six or seven feet in length, and running into a solid square of masonry hereafter described. The facing of the walling appeared not to have been disturbed, except where it had been cut into by workmen during the excavation of the site who, by so doing had exposed its interior.

The walling was seen to be composed of the usual bonding-tiles, in this instance in a double row set with wide joints in mortar of the same character as that found during the excavations in Gracechurch Street. The north face of the wall was distant 26 inches from the north face of the church, the measurement being taken at a distance of about 12 feet from the east face of the porch and at the west end of the fragment of Roman wall. There was disclosed the remarkable feature that the wall was not parallel with the north wall of the church. Thus, in the length of three feet six inches under examination, there was a difference of nine inches. According to Mr. Edward's reading of the compass, the face of the Roman wall ran at an angle of 305 degrees to the magnetic north, i.e. a few points west of north-west. From the top of the wall to the street level, the distance was

stated to be seven feet six inches; from the top of the first row of tiles to the street-level, eight feet three inches. The wall extended some distance below the base of the excavation; an iron stake driven in to a depth of a couple of feet or thereabouts against the face of the wall met with no obstruction.

Although not identical in construction with the transverse wall cut through at the east end of the Church in Gracechurch Street, yet, from its inclination and from indications where it passed below the church, it is probable that it joined up with the fragment traversed in Gracechurch Street.

To the east of, and immediately adjoining, the foundation of the porch of the church of St. Peter, a large mass of rammed chalk, Kentish rag, tiling, etc. was cut into. Into this mass the Roman wall entered. The visible mass extended from the porch some 7 feet 8 inches. In the opinion of the foreman of the works, who found similar material at the eastern end of the excavations, it is probable that the rammed mass extended easterly as far as that position.

A visit was then paid to the excavated site of No. 36 Cornhill, where a large building was in course of erection; the building being at the north-west corner of Birchin Lane. Two masses of Roman walling had been encountered. The one mass which we inspected lay at a distance of some four feet six inches south of the front of the building and at right angles to a narrow passage (Ball Court) at, the east end of the site, the wall apparently passing below the passage. The mass had been cut into irregularly and was thus not easy of description. However, there could be seen bonding-tiles above several layers of rubble—four or five layers—and apparently bonding-tiles below.\* The upper surface of the

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\* Concerning this observation, Mr. Edward says:—This, I afterwards discovered, was not a Roman wall, but a wall built with Roman materials or debris. What we thought to be bonding-tiles were really roofing-tiles laid very artfully to make them appear as Roman work. Here were found two layers of burnt wood with tiles attached in a few cases, thus marking two fires.

wall was about nine feet below the level of the street pavement.

An intelligent excavator informed us of the presence of Roman-walling which, at the corner of Birch Lane, ran at an angle across the building. The doorway or entrance which was under construction was aligned with this wall at a distance back of six feet six inches. The direction of the wall can therefore be easily settled. The foreman in charge estimated its direction as being about 30 degrees to Cornhill. The workman said that the walling continued in either direction i.e. to the north-east and south-west. Its presence raises the interesting question as to the relation of this wall to the wall at the base of St. Peter, Cornhill, and its continuation in Gracechurch Street.

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BY

WILLIAM C. EDWARDS.

My final report regarding the Gracechurch Street excavations I propose to leave to a later date.

Meanwhile I beg to report that on passing down Cornhill on my return from abroad, on Monday the 23rd of January, 1923, I noticed that the shops 56/57 had during my absence, been pulled down. These are situated on the North side of St. Peter's, and obtaining admission, I was delighted to find the Roman wall which I had expected to find under the north wall of this church. However, instead of running with it, it comes out about half way down and then goes in a north-westerly and south easterly direction (305').

From the row of 2-in. Roman tiles up to the road level there are eight feet four inches. The wall is not yet clear and I fear will not be because at the West end adjoining the church porch there is a solid mass of masonry, about nine feet square. This has been built in three periods, the Roman,