

## LETCOMBE BASSETT.

The Tower of this Church, which contains 3 Bells, has no ladder. The dates, obtained, but not the Inscriptions, are :—

1st. 1576.

2nd. 1576.

3rd. 1728.

## NEWBURY ST. NICHOLAS.

In 1724, the Tenor Bell was given by Mr. Henry Bennet, and in 1803 the whole peal of 8 bells were re-cast by James Wells, of Aldbourne, Wilts. Weight of Tenor 25 cwt.

The Aldbourne Foundry (no trace of which now remains) owned by the Corrs, and then the Wells, supplied a large number of Bells to Berks and Wilts. Their heaviest was about 25 cwt. The following advt. appeared in the Marlborough Journal in 1772 :—

“At the Bell Foundry at Aldbourne, Wilts, Church Bells are cast in a most elegant and as musical a manner as in any part of the Kingdom ; the founder having made the theory of sounds, as well as the nature of metals his chief study. All orders will be punctually observed by R. Wells, Founders.”

W. H. HALLAM,

East Lockinge.

*(To be continued.)*

## Roman Relics.

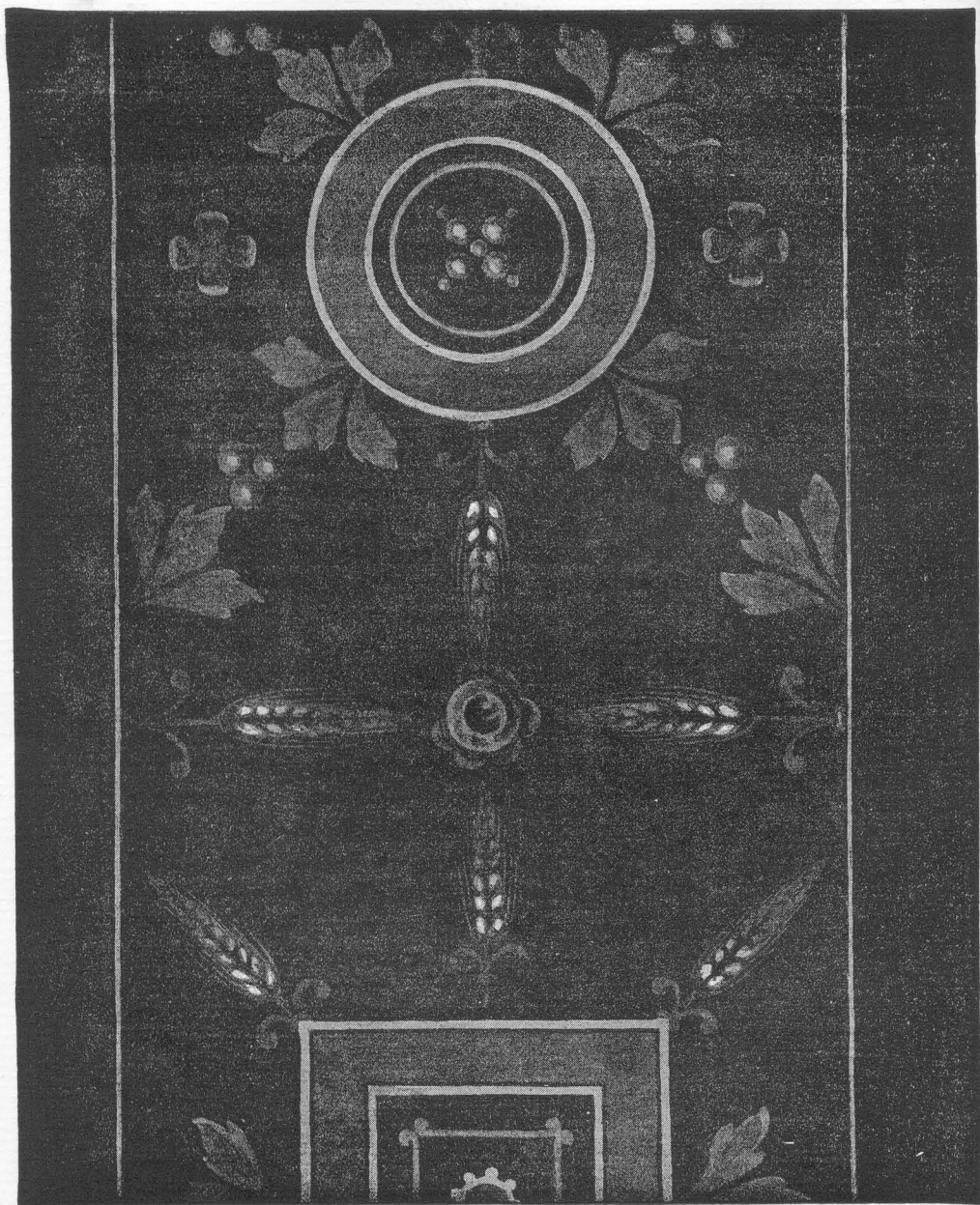
*By the Editor.*

**O**UR knowledge of Roman Britain has been vastly increased during recent years, chiefly by the exertions of the Society of Antiquaries in excavating the site of Roman city at Silchester. Berkshire antiquaries have especially benefitted by the labours of the Society, and Reading Museum is now a place of pilgrimage for all who wish to study the remains of the Roman occupation of

Britain. We have repeatedly called attention in this journal to the extent and the results of the excavations, a more detailed and exhaustive account of which may be found in the Transactions of the Society and in *Archæologia* ; but we would remind our readers that every year a very considerable expense is incurred in making these excavations at Silchester, and that funds are always needed and may be sent to us, or to the Secretary of the Society in London.

Our present purpose is to describe some of the remarkable objects which have been found during recent years, and to give some illustrations of the same. We will try to realise the appearance of a chamber in one of these Roman houses. The floor was composed of a tessellated pavement with much variety of colouring. The leading lines of the pattern were black ; the ground-work white ; and the designs made up of scarlet and purple red, a greenish and orange yellow, a blueish, a greenish and a brownish grey. The materials are nearly all of native stones or Purbeck marble, and the bright red *tesserae* made of brick. The pattern is often very elaborate, formed by bands of braidwork, the panels formed by the intersections of the bands being usually filled in with floral or other ornaments or figure subjects. The ornamented panels do not always occupy the centre of the floor space, but have a wide margin of red *tesserae* of irregular width. Evidently the furniture of the room, the couches, presses, cabinets, &c., were ranged on these irregular spaces. In 1894 some very beautifully designed mosaics were discovered at Silchester, models of which may be seen at the Reading Museum.

The walls of the chambers were profusely adorned with paintings, and although the remains of these are scanty, they show that the colours and methods of work were the same as those employed in Italy though possibly with less skill and refinement. One specimen shows draperies of a gold colour with the folds dependent from shaded lines, imitating mouldings. A dado ran round the room painted so as to represent marble. One piece of wall plaster shows that painted columns were sometimes used. One pattern of which we give an illustration is very beautiful, representing a series of rings and hollow squares of a gray colour upon a dark claret-red ground, linked together by lines of ears of barley, with intermediate centres of blue rosettes. Diagonal lines of leaves and berries make up the design. The painter evidently took his pattern from the harvest fields that girt the Roman City, showing also the corn-cockle that grows amidst the barley ; just as the painters of Italy drew



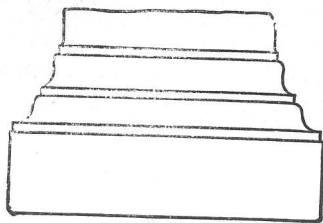
RESTORATION OF MURAL DECORATIONS AT SILCHESTER.

their designs from the vine, the myrtle and acanthus, which they saw growing around them. The process of painting the walls was evidently the same as that in use at Pompeii, and also the division of the wall-space into three portions, a dado, panels and a frieze. The Romans loved colour, and even the roughest chambers, were ornamented with painted work. Some idea of the appearance of a chamber in a Roman house as it stood in the palmy days of Silchester may thus be found.

Another important discovery is that of an *aedicula* or shrine for the images of the *lares* or household gods, together with a room called a *lararium* or domestic chapel. Few effigies of the gods worshipped by the Romans have been found at Silchester, but we give an illustration of a small bronze statuette dug up there seventy years ago, and now in the possession of W. G. Mount, Esq., M.P. A few fragments of statuettes of Venus have also been discovered, but possibly the introduction of Christianity caused the destruction of these relics of an ancient faith. The fragment of a capital given in the accompanying figure probably formed part of one of the columns adorning the shrine.

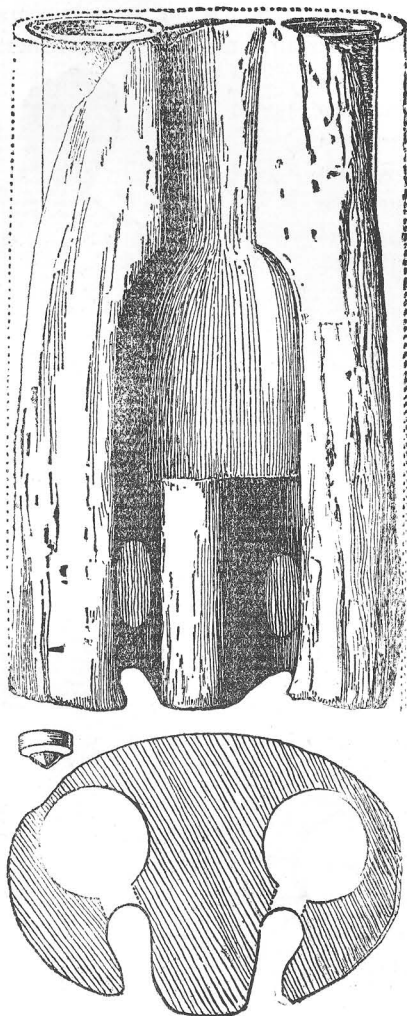


BRONZE FIGURE.

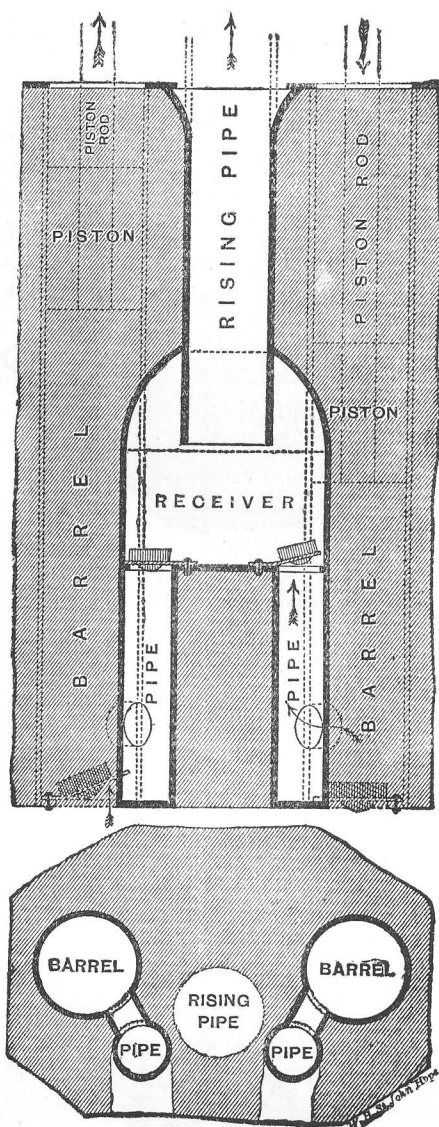


CAPITAL OF COLUMN.

A very remarkable relic was discovered in one of the pits. It is a Roman force-pump, identical in character with that described by

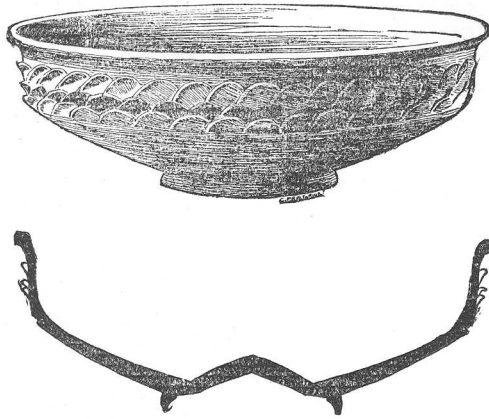


ROMAN FORCE-PUMP.



RESTORATION OF ROMAN FORCE-PUMP.

Vitruvius, as the machine of Ctesibius. We give illustrations of the actual object discovered, and of the restoration of the same, which shows how the machine worked and the ingenuity of its construction. A very fine glass bowl has also been discovered broken in sixteen fragments, which have been fastened together with much skill, so that the bowl is almost perfect. A pane of clear window glass has also been found, several bronze objects, a *stylus*, tweezers, keys, a pair of compasses, knives, &c., and a beautiful bowl ornamented with a triple band of overlapping scales and covered with a greenish-yellow glaze (*vide* illustration). I am indebted to the Society of



BOWL (WITH SECTION).

Antiquaries for their kindness in allowing me to use the illustrations contained in this brief description of their work, and to their publications for information concerning them. The excavations for 1897 will shortly commence, and we wish the able Antiquaries who conduct this work every possible success and a prosperous season.

