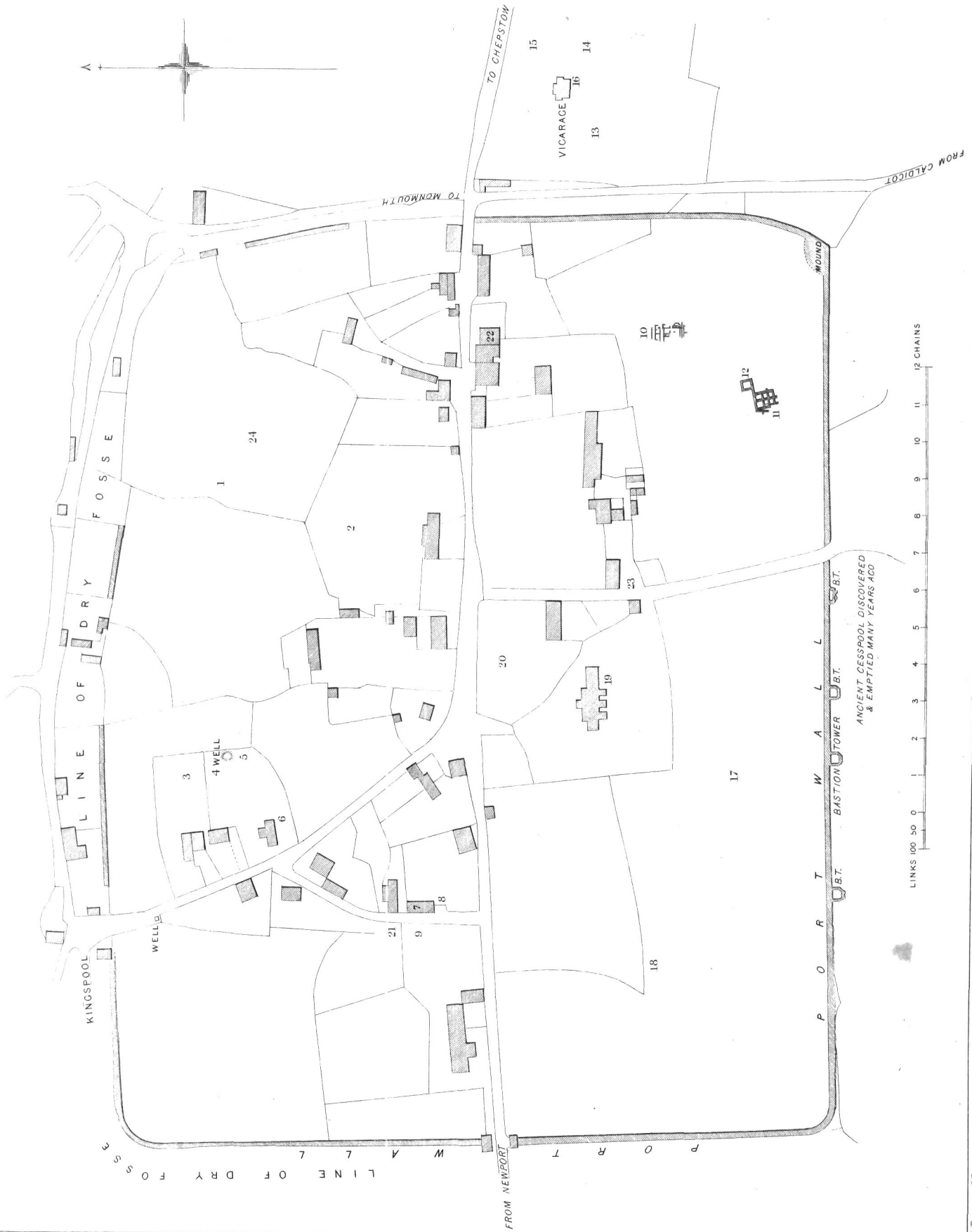


XXXVI. *Excavations prosecuted by the Caerleon Archæological Association within the Walls of Caerwent in the Summer of 1855. By OCTAVIUS MORGAN, Esq. M.P. F.S.A.*

Read 6 December, 1855.

IN the course of last season I informed the Society of Antiquaries that it was my intention to make, on the part of the Caerleon Archæological Association, an examination of some of the remains of the ancient Roman buildings at Caerwent; and I promised to lay before them the result. In redemption of that promise, I have now the pleasure to communicate to the Society the particulars of the excavations which were made in the course of last summer, under the direction and superintendence of our excellent and able Secretary, J. Y. Akerman, Esq.; and I gladly take this opportunity of publicly tendering to him, on the part of the members of the Caerleon Association, and myself, our thanks for the very careful attention and unremitting assiduity with which he directed the operations. I must also tender my acknowledgments to Thomas Wakeman, Esq. who has made deep researches and large collections relative to the history of Monmouthshire; and who, at the Annual Meeting of the Caerleon Archæological Association, in August last, read a paper on the history of Caerwent, of which he has kindly allowed me to embody a large portion in this communication.

The identity of Caerwent, or Caergwent, with Venta Silurum, one of the stations on the Via Julia, mentioned in the 14th Iter of Antonine, has been uniformly admitted. Not so the actual course of the Via Julia, or the exact spot where the channel was crossed. The very able and valuable memoir, "On the British and Roman Roads communicating with Caerwent," by George Ormerod, Esq. F.S.A. which was read at the Bristol Meeting of the Archæological Institute, in 1851, and printed in the Bristol volume of its Proceedings, has discussed that subject at length, and in a most able and satisfactory manner; and to that I must refer all who may desire information upon that point. We have now only to do with Venta Silurum itself.



A. Baerent. del.

J. Baerent. sc.

PLAN OF CAERWENT IN THE COUNTY OF MONMOUTH, 1855.

With regard to the name *Venta* it is very probably only the Latinised form of the British *Gwent*, the ancient name of the district which included the present county of Monmouth, and parts of those adjoining. No satisfactory etymology of this name *Gwent* has yet been given. Dr. Owen Pugh defines it a fair, open champaign region, deriving it from *gwen*—fair, white. How unsuited such a descriptive name is to the county of Monmouth, all who have been there will testify, though it might be applied to the flat country along the banks of the channel; including, perhaps, the immediate vicinity of Caerwent. Leland calls this country *Venteland*, and says it was divided into low, middle, and high; and the name *Netherwent*, as applied to the district in the vicinity of Caerwent, obtains to this day in the name of a neighbouring parish, *St. Bride's Netherwent*, probably to distinguish it from *St. Bride's* in *Wentllwch*, which is still the name of that tract of country lying between the rivers *Usk* and *Rumney*, as it was in the time of Leland. The name *Gwent* was probably the designation of this region till the formation of the English county of Monmouth, by statute in the reign of Henry VIII. The name *Gwentllwch* is said to have been derived from *Gwynllyw*, a chieftain of that country, and one of the Cambro-British saints who lived in the sixth century; and Leland states that "the Welshmen say it is no part of the three *Wencelands*;" but, from their contiguity, it is probable that the names *Gwent*, *Gwynllyw*, and *Gwentllwch* were derived from some common source.

Mr. Wakeman proposes another derivation. Winchester had the same name, with the addition of *Belgarum*; and there was also *Venta Icenorum* in Norfolk: and he suggests that, whatever may have been its real import, it may be traced in the names of the *Venedi*, or *Wendi*, a people of Germany, the *Veneti* in Italy, and the *Veneti* in Gaul, all Celtic tribes; and these latter occupied the country to the south of *Armorica*, on the western coast, and were a people powerful by sea. According to the *Triads*, the third social tribe which settled in Britain came from *Armorica*; may it not then be inferred that our *Gwenti* were a colony of those of the same name in that country? This is also a suggestion of Richard of Cirencester, in his account of Britain. If this were so, the preservation of their original appellation would be a strong confirmation of the truth of the tradition recorded in the *Triad*; and the Romans, finding *Gwent* the established name of the region, Latinised and gave it to the town which they built, distinguishing it by the name of the tribe which inhabited the country. In like manner the river *Wysk*, or *Usk*, though flowing through an extensive district, was made to give the name only to the town founded on it.

Sir Richard Colt Hoare, in a note to his Introduction to Giraldus's Itinerary, says, "The Silures, with their subordinate tribes the Dimetiæ and Ordovices, possessed all the country west of the Severn and the Dee, under their capital Venta, or Caerwent," whence he seems to have inferred that a British town or fort existed here, upon the site of which the Roman station was afterwards founded; and others have fallen into the same error. There is, however, no authority whatever for the assertion that the Silures had a town called Caerwent at all, nor is the name of this capital anywhere mentioned. Moreover, the situation of this place does not at all agree with those chosen by the Britons for the sites of their strongholds, which were placed on lofty hills, where the nature of the ground rendered them difficult of access, or easily defended; whereas, it is just the situation which the Romans would have chosen for a *castrum stativum*, which might afterwards have become a town.

There are some British Caers in the neighbourhood, but the only one of sufficient magnitude to warrant the supposition that it may have been the capital, is the Gaer Vawr (the great fort), some three or four miles to the north; but it is impossible to say what its original name may have been.

Of the foundation or early history of Venta nothing is recorded, and the first mention of its name, and only the name, is in the 14th Iter of Antonine. The next is by Richard of Cirencester, who in the fourteenth century wrote his Itinerary and account of Britain. He says that the chief cities of the Silures were Sariconium (Ross), Gobaneum (Abergavenny), and Venta their capital; and adds, that a Roman colony possessed the city built on the Isca, and called it after that name. Again, "Fuerunt olim apud Britannos xcii. urbes; earum vero celebriores et præ reliquiis conspicuæ xxxii. scilicet municipia ii. coloniæ viii. (among which is Isca), civitates Latio jure donatæ x. et stipendiariæ minorisque momenti xii." of which Venta Silurum heads the list. The *urbes stipendiariæ* were, I believe, those which paid their taxes in money and not in kind. It is curious that he should have styled Venta the capital of the country, when the more important town of Isca was so close: unless, indeed, being a *colonia*, he considered it rather in the light of a foreign than of a native place. All that we certainly know of the place is, that it was a Roman station; and the remains of the walls still visible, and the discoveries that have been made from time to time within the walls, and in the neighbourhood, prove, I think, beyond a doubt that it was a town of considerable importance, and, during the Roman occupation, second only to Caerleon. The area within the walls is about 40 acres, that of Caerleon being 50.

The Silures were reduced to subjection about the year 72 of the Christian era by Julius Frontinus, from whom the Via Julia is thought to have been named; and he very probably laid the foundation of Venta, which from what follows would seem to have been a town of some importance down to a period a little anterior to the Norman conquest—that is to say, above 900 years—during which long space, however, we know very little of its history.

Within a century after the extinction of the Roman power in Britain, this district formed part of the principality of Glamorgan, which was under the government of chieftains who claimed to be, and perhaps were, the direct descendants of the Silurian prince Caractacus. Gwent appears to have been under the rule of a junior branch of the same family; and the chieftains were generally, but according to our ideas improperly, termed Kings of Gwent. It is probable that these subreguli made Caerwent their capital. One of them, Caradoc ap Ynyr, King of Gwent, apparently in the early part of the sixth century, gave certain lands at Caerwent to his wife's nephew St. Tathay,^a who here founded a school and monastery, in which, among others, our celebrated Gwentian saint Cadoc was educated. Tathay is also said to have been guardian and instructor of Maches, a sister of Cadoc, who, having been murdered by a Saxon mendicant, was esteemed a martyr; and the memory of both her and St. Tathay is preserved in the name of the neighbouring church, called in the records Llanvaches alias Llantatheys, although the latter name is now obsolete. St. Tathay is commemorated in the calendar on the 26th December. The situation of this church confirms in some measure the connection of St. Tathay with Caerwent. As to the school, it may be observed that all the great schools in Wales, Llanancarvan, Llanilltyd, and the rest, were also monasteries, and the superiors styled abbots. A grant to Bishop Pater, recorded in the Liber Landavensis between the years 943 and 961, was witnessed, among others, by Goronwy of Gwrvod, abbot of the city of Gwent (Guentoniæ urbis). Two other grants to Bishop Gwrgan, between 972 and 982, were witnessed by Eidef, reader of the city of Gwent (lector urbis Gwenti). According to Ducange, the lector in monasteries was the professor or teacher of philosophy and theology. Both school and town were then existing, as the term "urbs" would hardly have been applied to a mere village—and this brings us down to within a century of the Conquest. A grant to Bishop Herwald in the time of Roger, son of William Fitz-Osborn, which fixes the date 1072, was witnessed by Jevan ap Rhun, priest of Caerwent. It was no longer styled

^a See his life in the Lives of the Cambro-British Saints, and the Liber Landavensis, published by the Welsh Manuscript Society.

“urbs;” and it may be inferred that the town had been destroyed in the interval—most probably by the Saxon earl Harold, who in the reign of Edward the Confessor overran the greater part of Gwent eastward of the Usk, and commenced building a house at Portskewett, which was destroyed by Caradoc ap Griffith ap Rhydderch in or about the year 1056: this we learn from the Saxon Chronicle. At the time of Domesday survey, Beli Hardd ap Brochvael was lord of Caerwent. He is mentioned in that document as Beluard de Carven, and held half a carucate of land of the king, but paid nothing. There is no mention of a town, and the small quantity of land which he held leads to the inference that Beli was much reduced in state and influence; and the erection of Chepstow Castle and lordship at this period would prevent Caerwent ever again rising into importance. His son Owen ap Beli seems to have been the last Welsh lord of Caerwent: he was living in the reign of Henry I. In the same reign, Walter Fitz Richard de Clare is styled in Dugdale Lord of Caerwent—no doubt on some good authority; though Mr. Wakeman has failed to find anything in the records to confirm it. The Anglo-Norman Barons were not over-scrupulous in ejecting Welsh proprietors on very slight pretences. Whether in this instance Owen was so ejected, or received an equivalent elsewhere in exchange, is uncertain: he removed, however, into Somersetshire, where he and his descendants for many generations, under the name of De Carwent, and latterly Carent, held lands under the Clares and their successors, lords of Chepstow.

The earliest subinfeudists of Caerwent mentioned in the records were the Lucys, who were seated here in the reign of King John.* In the beginning of the sixteenth century the manor belonged to a branch of the Kemeys family, who were the last resident proprietors. What was the manor-house is about a quarter of a mile on the Chepstow road, and now called Slough or Slow, an English corruption of Islaw Gwent, that is, the lower side of the town of Gwent. The manor in some documents is called Slough, alias Caerwent, and the Kemeys are described in deeds as of Islaw Gwent, or Slow. After the Kemeys it was the property of the family of Williams of Llangibby, and in 1701 was sold by Sir John Williams to John Jeffereys, Esq. of London, who in 1732 sold it to Admiral Matthews, whose grandson Thomas sold it in 1782 to Sir Mark Wood, Bart.: from him it was purchased by the father of the present proprietor, the

* The manor of Caerwent is a mesne manor holden of the lords of Gwentllwch by the service of one knight's fee, but it now includes Maesgwenith, holden of the lords of Strigul by half a knight's fee. Both belonged to the Lucys, and have always gone together.

Rev. Freke Lewis, to whom I am much indebted for permission to make the excavations.^a

Caerwent is situated on a gentle rise in the middle of a broad valley, bounded on the north and south by ranges of low hills. The walls inclose an area of about 40 acres in the form of a parallelogram, in round numbers about 500 yards long by 400 wide. By actual measurement the north wall is 507, the south 505, the east 390, and the west 409 yards: the position N.W. and S.E., the angles being nearly in the direction of the four cardinal points. The Via Julia, now the turnpike road from Chepstow to Newport, passes through the middle of it from east to west, dividing it into two equal parts. A brook, called the Troggy in the higher part of its course, but here in this lower part the Nedern, flows by on the south side, about a furlong distant, and after a course of three miles falls into the Bristol Channel at Caldicot Pill. This brook is generally dry in summer.

The earliest descriptive account we have is in Leland, who may have visited it about 1545. He says, " Cairgwent in Base Venteland is iiii. miles from Chepstow, in the way to Cairlion. It was sum tyme a fair and a large cyte; the places where the iiii. gates was yet appear, and the most part of the wall yet standeth, but al to-minished and torne. In the lower part of the wall toward a lytle valey standeth yet the ruine of a stronge Within and about the waulle now be a xvi. or xvii. small houses for husbondmen, of a new making, and a parish church of S. Stephen. In the towne yet appear pavements of the old streets, and in digging they find foundation of great brykes, tessellata pavimenta et numismata argentea simul et ærea. A great lykelihood is that when Cairgwent began to decay, then began Chepstow to flourish." The next mention is in Camden's *Britannia*, the first edition of which was printed in 1586. "Several do affirm, and not without reason, that Chepstow had its rise not many ages past from the ancient city Venta, which flourished about four miles from hence, in the time of Antoninus, who calls it Venta Silurum, as if it were their chief city, which name neither arms nor time have been able to consume, for at this day it is called Caerwent, or the city Venta; but the city itself is so much destroyed by the one and the other that it only appears to have once been, from the ruinous walls, the chequered pavements, and the Roman coins. . . . The city took up about a mile in circumference; on the south side a considerable part of the wall is yet remaining, and more than the ruins of three bastions. What repute it had heretofore we may gather from hence, that, before the name of Monmouth was heard of, this whole country was called Gwent, Wensct, or Wentsland. More-

^b For these details of the history I am chiefly indebted to my friend Mr. Wakeman.

over, we read in the life of Tathaius, a British saint (Lib. Landavensis), it was formerly an academy, or place dedicated to literature, which this same Tathaius governed with great commendation; and also furnished a church there in the reign of king Cradoc ap Ynyr, who invited him here from the hermitage."

The remains of the walls are still fine even in their ruined state, the original fosse is still clearly seen on the northern and western and eastern sides, and the wall exists nearly all round the inclosure.

The most perfect portion is, however, on the south side, and near the south-east angle is about 25 feet in height. Much of the facing of the wall, especially along the base where it is within easy reach, has been removed for building purposes, thus showing the internal masonry, which is a kind of herring-bone work; the stones are flat, of irregular sizes, and are set obliquely and bedded in the mortar. On the south side are still seen the remains of the three bastions, or octagonal turrets, projecting from the wall: one has almost disappeared, and a recent clearance of rubbish has revealed the remains of a fourth, 175 feet eastward of the other three, thus showing that the south wall was defended by four towers along its face, nearly equidistant from each other. These were not part of the original wall, but later additions built up against it. According to Roy, the generality of Roman stations in Britain seem to have been originally constructed without turrets at the angles, or in the intermediate spaces of the walls, though the corners of the inclosure were generally rounded, as is the case here. This seems to argue in favour of the early foundation of Venta, and its being strengthened at a later period by these turrets or buttress-towers being built up against it.

There are also visible the bonding-courses of thin layers of old red sandstone, probably in imitation of brick, though now the colour is the same as the other stone. In this south wall, which is yet called the port wall, it is said that mooring rings were fixed for the convenience of vessels which came up the river to some pool or basin beneath the walls. No traces of such rings have ever been found or recorded to have existed, nor is there the least vestige of such basin or canal; besides which, the Nedern is generally dry in summer; and at a short distance outside the south wall, many years ago, a very large pit was found, full of black soil, and appearing as though it had been the cesspool for the drains on that side of the town.

Within the inclosure the ground is nearly on a level with the top of the wall; it seems, therefore, that what was excavated in making the foss was thrown up inside the wall, and on the south side it looks as if the gentle slope had been cut

away, and, by throwing up the soil so removed inside the wall, increased the height within, and gave greater depth outside the wall. Seyer, in his History of Bristol, gives an account of Caerwent, from some observations made in 1786, which state that “ the eastern gateway was not entirely obliterated. On the left, as you enter, the quoin to which the gate was hung still remains.” And Coxe, when he visited it in 1801, says that “ the remains of the masonry of the eastern gate were still visible, and that a stone, to which one of the hinges was attached, stands at the door of a public house, and was used as a horse-block :” these have, however, all long disappeared.

The following list will afford an idea of the number of interesting remains existing, or at one time existing, within the walls of Caerwent. The localities are indicated by corresponding figures on the map :—

1. Remains of tessellated pavement, disturbed and partly destroyed.
2. Remains of tessellated pavement.
3. Remains of two tessellated pavements, in great part destroyed.
4. Well of Roman construction.
5. Remains of a ruined hypocaust, with sandstone pillars.
6. Two semicircular walls, apparently parts of towers.
7. The site from which a tessellated pavement was removed by the late Bishop of Llandaff. It was discovered by accident in digging the foundations of a barn, which now occupies the spot.
8. Sawpit, in digging which were found the base silver coins, exhibited by the Rev. Maconald Steel to the Soc. Antiq. : see Proceedings, vol. ii. p. 107.
9. A mortuary urn was found here by a labourer digging in his garden. It is now in the museum at Caerleon.
- 10, 11. Remains of buildings excavated in July, 1855.
12. The site of the fine pavement discovered in 1777.
13. Well, unexamined.
14. The mouth of a drain was discovered here, running from east to west, in building the vicarage in 1846.
15. Cesspool or rubbish-pit, about 8 feet deep, laid open when the vicarage was built.
16. When the vicarage was built, three coffins, formed of rough slabs, were found here ; one contained three crania of persons of different ages.
17. Remains of foundations, with traces of tessellated pavements.
18. The ground is slightly raised here, the soil very black, and tesserae have been turned up.

19. The ancient south aisle of the church covered this spot. When the earth of the churchyard was lowered, the grave of an ecclesiastic was discovered, with a chalice and paten on the breast. The churchyard appears to be full of Roman remains. The foundations of buildings may be traced in the S.W. corner. Roman coins have been frequently turned up.

20. This spot was once a common field. On planting an orchard there some years ago, the ground was found to be crammed with human remains.

21. The pound. In digging the foundation for the wall, three stone steps were discovered here.

22. Traces of foundations were met with when a barn was built on this spot.

23. Anciently a cross stood here.

24. Remains of the foundations of several rooms.

Of the church I shall not at present speak, which, though evidently built with stones from the more ancient structures (in many of which the lewis holes are still visible, such stones being in places and positions where no such instruments would have been used to raise them), is mediæval. There are, however, two arches that some persons have considered Roman, though I must confess that I entertain some doubts. A few stones and remains have been found in the churchyard, and the soil is said to be very black, as though it were the ancient cemetery. That, however, may well be the case if it has only been the Christian burial-ground for so many centuries. There are no very ancient tombstones, nor has it been discovered where the cemetery was in the time of the Roman occupation; and, strange to say, only one inscribed stone has ever been discovered here, and no one knows where it was found, or what has become of it. Seyer records the fact in the following words: "An inscription on a stone dug up here was—'Julia esseunda vixit annos xxxv.'" In November, 1854, however, a Roman grave was discovered by some men who were cutting deep drains in a field by the side of the road leading to Newport, about a quarter of a mile from the walls. The circumstances of this grave were peculiar, and I examined it carefully; but there was no inscription nor anything calculated to give a clue to the date, or the individual interred.

Many tessellated pavements are recorded to have been discovered at Caerwent and its neighbourhood, perhaps more than in any other spot. Leland and Camden mention them generally as common features of the place.

Gibson, in his Additions to Camden, says that "in the year 1689 there were three chequered pavements discovered in a garden here (Fr. Ridley's), which being in frosty weather exposed to the open air, upon the thaw the cement was

dissolved, and this valuable antiquity utterly lost. In one of these pavements, as the owner relates, were delineated several flowers, which he compared to roses, tulips, and flowers-de-luce, and at each of the four corners a crown, and a peacock holding a snake in his bill and treading it under his foot. Another had a figure of a man in armour from the breast upwards. There were also imperial heads and some other variety of figures, which, had they been preserved, might have been instructive as well as diverting to the curious in the study of antiquities." Again, "In the year 1693, one Charles Kinton showed me part of a Roman brick pavement in his yard; the bricks were somewhat above a foot long, nine inches broad, and an inch and a half thick—all marked thus σ ."

Caerwent seems soon to have attracted the attention of Fellows of this Society, and in the early volumes of the *Archæologia* are several notices respecting it.

In 1763 (Vol. II.) the Society was informed, that in an orchard adjoining the street was discovered, a few years previously, "the remnant of a tessellated pavement, about a yard over. The colours are lively enough, but the figure of a dog or other animal under a tree very ill expressed."

In 1775 John Strange, Esq., F.S.A., communicated a long paper (printed in Vol. V.), in which he describes another pavement, which is accompanied by an engraving; it was in a cellar or out-house in an orchard belonging to Mrs. Williams, on which was still preserved part of a vase and a bird, and on which there had been figures of a lion, a tiger, and a stag.

He also communicated, in 1778, a description of the beautiful pavement which had been discovered the previous year, of which, fortunately, an accurate coloured drawing has been preserved; and Seyer tells us that the side wall of the chamber was plastered smooth and painted red. This chamber and pavement were roofed in with a view to their preservation, but being neglected, and becoming decayed, the tiles were taken from the roof to repair another building, and the pavement, from exposure to the weather, and the depredations of collectors, soon utterly perished, and the walls which inclosed it alone remain.

In a field called the Cherry Orchard, about half a mile westward of Caerwent, some Roman remains of great interest were discovered about twenty-five years ago. One very handsome tessellated pavement was destroyed by children, and a large portion of another pavement was subsequently found, but immediately covered up as the only means of preservation. And a few years ago a portion of another pavement was discovered in a cottage garden, a few inches below the surface; there was nothing remarkable in its pattern or quality, and, being unprotected, it was soon destroyed.

Great quantities of Roman coins have from time immemorial been found here, in such abundance, indeed, that one would think they had been sown broadcast, for the earth is hardly ever moved without some being turned up. They are chiefly, if not entirely, of the Lower Empire, and many of base metal. We find in Bishop Gibson's enlarged edition of Camden, in 1722, that a collection of these coins had been made by George Kemeys, Esq. of Llanvair, and that they were chiefly of Valerianus, Gallienus, Probus, Dioclesianus, Constantius Chlorus, Constantinus Magnus, Julius Crispus, Constans, and both Valentinians. "In that collection was one adulterated coin of Antoninus Pius, which seems to have been counterfeited, not of late but anciently, when that emperor's coins were current money; it is a brass piece, of the bigness of a denarius, covered with a very thin leaf of silver, which when rubbed off the letters disappear." Nothing is known as to what became of this collection, and the Kemeys family no longer exists here.

I have here endeavoured to extract from all the previous accounts of Caerwent, as well as from other sources, every particular relating to its history and locality, and to arrange the information thus collected, so as to form a complete history of the place, as an introduction to the account of the recent excavations, the particulars of which I will now proceed to detail.

The south-east corner of the inclosure within the walls is occupied by an orchard belonging to a large old farm-house, the largest in the place, and called, in the old parish-books of the last century, Ty Mawr, and the *Great House*.^a This is occupied by Mr. George Dowle, to whom we are much indebted for his aid in our works, this orchard being the scene of our operations. At the south-east angle of the wall, within the orchard, is a lofty mound, from which could have been obtained a view of some miles of the roads in the direction of the Passage and Chepstow. In this orchard are several rough mounds, marking the remains of ancient buildings, and it was by one of these that the beautiful pavement was discovered in 1777. The mound where we commenced our operations was a little to the north-east of this, and we were induced to begin here by an opening which had long before been broken into the chamber of a hypocaust.

This building had to all appearance been a Roman villa, or dwelling-house, within the walls; it is situated near the eastern wall, and must have been a house of some extent. A large portion of it on all sides had, to use the provincial term, been "mooted up," and carried away, for the sake of the stone for building

^a As Leland does not mention any large house, this building is probably not much earlier than the beginning of the last century.



The Winding of a Wall

J. Basire, del. 1778.

J. Barraick

TESSELLATED PAVEMENT.
discovered. February. 1777, at Caerwent.

Published by the Society of Antiquaries of London, 25th April, 1856.

purposes, and it is not improbable that the Great House and its offices were built out of these ruins. The ground-plan No. 2 will give an idea of the walls and the arrangement of the chambers which we excavated. The arrangement of all the Romano-British villas and houses which I have seen is, I must confess, to me very unintelligible, and seems to bear no relation to the plans of Roman villas in Italy. I shall not therefore attempt to assign any use to the different apartments; one thing was however quite clear, that this house had undergone various alterations, and had had some additions made to it. The walls were for the most part, where the chambers were cleared, from 4 to 6 feet high, and 2 feet thick, and the mass of soil to be removed therefore was very considerable.

The ground first opened was the area marked 10 in the plan, which had long been known to cover a hypocaust. It was filled up with earth mixed with numerous large stones, which about a foot above the surface of the floor were found mingled with broken concrete, mortar, fragments of stucco, with fragments of common pottery, oyster and mussel shells, the bones of the ox, sheep, and pig, and large flat-headed iron nails. In the north-east corner was discovered a bronze armilla, and another object of the same metal, now exhibited. The walls of this room had been covered with a reddish or salmon-coloured stucco, and the floor consisted of a layer of concrete, about three inches thick, resting on slabs of sandstone, which formed the roof of the hypocaust beneath, and were supported in the middle on two rows of roughly squared sandstone pillars, resting at the sides on two dwarf walls. In each angle of this chamber was fixed a square upright flue-tile, communicating with the hypocaust. The small area at the end of this chamber, No. 11, was next cleared. In one corner was discovered the upper portion of a stone quern, the lip of a glass vessel, fragments of pottery,

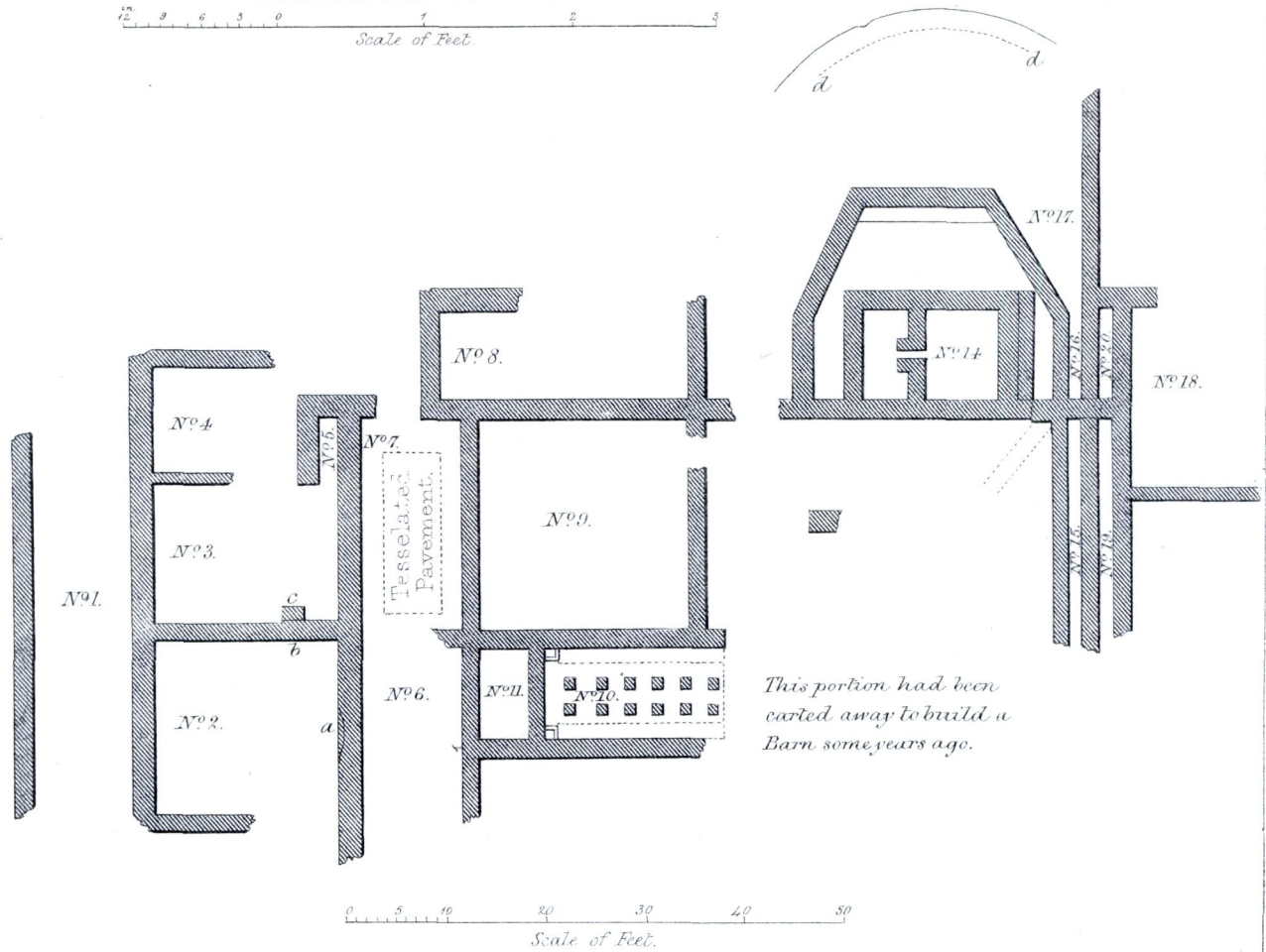
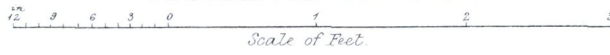


a bronze stylus, and several roofing tiles, of the form of an elongated hexagon, made of the slaty sandstone of the district called tile-stone; they at once explained the meaning of the flat-headed nails already noticed, some of them being still fixed in these tiles. Further excavation showed that the præfurnium of the hypocaust was at this end.

The bottom of this small chamber, which was about 5 feet by 10, was on a level with the floor of the hypocaust; it therefore resembled a deep pit, being about 6 feet below the present top of the walls. Here the fuel must have been kept; but there was no doorway, and the attendant who had charge of the fire could only have had access by means of wooden steps or ladders. The mouth of the præfurnium was not arched, but was a pseudo arch, formed with horizontal overlapping stones. In the area No. 6 was the same accumulation of earth and stones and concrete, with traces of a ruined tessellated pavement.



TESSELLATED PAVEMENT.



GROUND PLAN of a ROMAN BUILDING at CAERWENT.

Published by the Society of Antiquaries of London, 23rd April, 1856.

J. Basire, del.

In No. 2 was the same accumulation of earth and stones, to the depth of 6 feet. In the south wall, at *a*, was a shallow recess, resembling a rough sort of open fireplace, marked by fire, with traces of ashes, bones, and fragments of copper slag. At *b* a doorway had been walled up. Here were also found a large iron bar, 2 feet 3 inches long; a piece of iron, 9 inches long, like a skewer, with a ring at one end; and some small, much-worn, coins of Magnentius and Valentinianus. In the north-east corner of this chamber were also found the bronze chain of twisted links, a bronze armilla of small size, a bronze stylus, and a minute silver hook. The floor of this chamber was found to be of stone and concrete, to the depth of 3 feet. No. 1 was portion of an area or passage between two parallel walls, probably outside the building. No. 4 was filled with large hewn stones to the depth of 6 feet, rendering the work more like the labour of a quarry, the heap being overgrown with bushes and stumps of trees. Here was found a well preserved silver coin of the Emperor Julian, A.D. 360.

No. 3 presented no remarkable feature save the inexplicable recess. No. 5, at *c*, was a projecting block of stone, about 12 inches high.

No. 8 had clearly been an addition made at some time to the building, and in a corner of it were found coins of third brass of Gallienus, Tetricus, Constantine, Constans, Carausius, and Arcadius.

In No. 9 were found two bone pins, the bowl of a spoon of some mixed metal, a spindle-whirl formed of a disc of red ware, a small bronze finger-ring, a bronze armilla, and twenty-eight small brass coins, principally of Tetricus, Constantine, and Valentinian.

On continuing the excavations towards the south, the foundations of two buildings, one within the other, were soon disclosed, the forms of which are given in figures 12, 13, 14; the whole appeared to have been inclosed within a semi-circular area, indicated by a dotted line, *d d*; the wall, however, had been removed, though the foundation of concrete remained. In clearing the space at 17, the ground had been disturbed to the depth of 8 or 9 feet, and had in fact been used as a deposit for rubbish, among which were found a coin of Gallienus, a bone bodkin or needle, a fragment of a bowl of Samian ware, fragments of an amphora, and coarse black pottery; bones, horns, and teeth of animals; the bottom of a cup of Samian ware, with the potter's mark PRIMA, and one of the sides of a knife-handle of bone. The walls of all these buildings, from 12 to 20, had all been razed to the ground, and nothing above the foundations remained, and these showed evident signs of additions and alterations having been made to the original structure; at 13 there was some trace of what seemed a præfurnium; but it is in vain to conjecture the uses of these small, curiously arranged apartments and

parallel walls. In 13 and 14, however, were found the fragments of a prettily ornamented vessel of unusually pellucid glass, bones of animals, shells of whelks, bodkins, some pins and spindle-whirls, and fragments of stucco of various colours. From the frequency of the bodkins, pins, and spindle-whirls in these chambers, we may fairly conjecture that these were the apartments appropriated to the females of the family.

No. 7 and No. 2, the continuation of it, appear to have been a passage going through the house, but none of the apartments seem to have opened into it. At No. 7, however, was discovered a fine tessellated pavement. It was covered to a considerable depth with the stucco and plaster, as if of the walls and ceiling, on the removal of which it was found to be entire, with a slight depression in one part. It is divided into four compartments, each 4 feet square: two of these contain circles formed by a bold twisted border, within plain bands, having a fret in the centre; and the other two contain a smaller square, set transversely, within which is a large reticulated fret, the spandrels being filled with a kind of chequer-work; the colours are bluish-grey, yellow, white, and red, and the tesserae are composed of the usual materials. The space between the coloured pavement and the walls was filled in with large coarse tesserae of dark sandstone. The pavement has been carefully taken up and removed to the museum at Caerleon, where it will be preserved. It is curious that, though the walls of most of these apartments are 5 and 6 feet high and more, there is no trace of any windows. How then were the rooms lighted? If by windows, they must have been very high above the floors, and there could have been no looking out; nor is it exactly clear how they could have obtained light, for some of the rooms seem to have had no external wall. From the various articles found here, it would seem as if this building had gone to decay or been destroyed during, or immediately after, the Roman occupation. There is no trace of fire: it was, therefore, not destroyed by burning. No article or utensil of later date than Roman has been found, nor is there any appearance of its having been inhabited or used in the mediæval period, except perhaps as a stone-quarry, else these Roman bronze articles could hardly have remained in the apartments. It is difficult to reconcile these facts with the idea of Caerwent having been a place of such importance between the departure of the Romans and the Conquest, unless, indeed, it sank to ruins after their departure, and was subsequently revived. The fact of there being no remains of intermediate buildings between the Roman stone structures and the modern cottages and houses may be easily accounted for, if we suppose that the Britons constructed their buildings of timber, which was in fact most probably the case, as the whole

country must at that time have been nearly covered with forests; and, even at this day, there are very extensive tracts of wood covering many of the hills.

We will now proceed to the most interesting portion of our works, namely, the Baths.

The Baths.

Close adjoining the south-west corner of the wall, inclosing the tessellated pavement which was discovered in 1777, was a rough heap or mound indicating the remains of former buildings. It was thought desirable to examine these, and excavation was commenced at the south side of the mound. A wall of very solid construction was discovered, and within this, at the depth of 5 feet, the men arrived at the floor of a hypocaust. Some of the pillars, which were formed of sandstone, had been displaced, and amongst them there was a quantity of wood-ashes, with masses of slag. This excavation was proceeded with, and there was ultimately uncovered a small block of building, 31 feet by 34, exhibiting a complete set of Roman baths, perhaps the most perfect exemplification of a private suite of baths attached to a dwelling-house yet brought to light. I say private baths, for I think they are on too small a scale to have belonged to any public establishment, though they contain, as I think I shall be able to show, all the requisite apartments, and exhibit the entire economy of Roman baths, both with regard to the mode of heating them as well as the general arrangement of the chambers, more completely than any others that I know, excepting the *Thermæ* at Pompeii.

Although it is not necessary here to go into the general question of Roman baths, it may be stated on the authority of various ancient writers, illustrated by the discoveries at Pompeii, that the essential apartments of a Roman bath were—the *frigidarium*, with the *piscina* or cold-water tank; the *apodyterium*, or dressing-room, which was slightly warmed; the *tepidarium*, a moderately heated chamber, where the processes of anointing, perfuming, shaving, and other such operations were performed when there were no apartments specially provided for them, which was only the case in the very large public establishments; the *caldarium*, a strongly heated chamber with a *calida piscina*, or hot-water bath; and lastly, the *sudatorium*, a chamber raised to a high temperature with a dry heat. All these apartments I think our baths exhibit arranged in the most compact manner. This building covers an area 31 feet by 34; and by reference to the ground-plan the arrangements of the various apartments will

be understood, whilst the sections will show the relative heights and depths of the floors, hypocausts, and bathing-tanks.

A, Entrance to the baths.

B, Frigidarium, having on one side

C, The Piscina, or cold-water bath.

D, The Apodyterium.

E, Tepidarium.

F, The Caldarium, with

G, The Calida Piscina, or hot-water bath.

H, The Sudatorium, close to

I, The Præfurnium, where the fire was made by which the hypocausts beneath the different chambers were heated.

K, Walls, probably forming portion of the court-yard inclosing the Præfurnium.

L, Portion of a Wall, which may have been part of a court or a chamber.

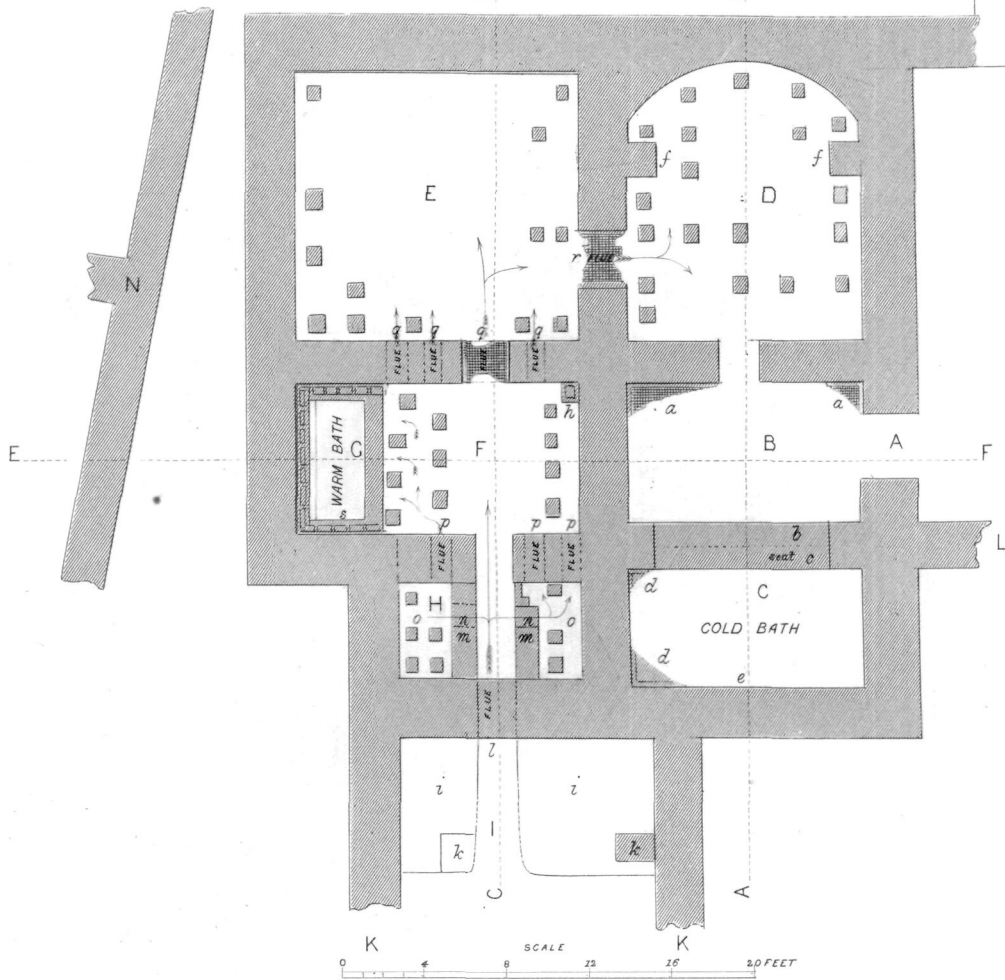
M, Corner of the area of the Pavement discovered in 1777.

N, Piece of Wall, which may have been part of some earlier building.

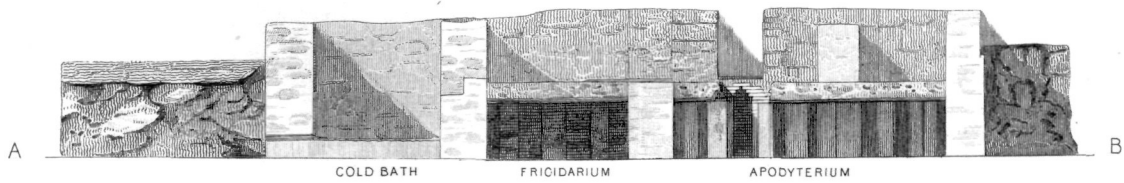
The entrance-doorway to these baths was at A ; the walls were 2 feet 6 inches thick, and the doorways 2 feet 6 inches wide : there is nothing to indicate whether it opened from a court-yard or a room, but it seems probable that the chamber of the pavement of 1777 opened into the same place. The doorway entered at once into the Frigidarium, a chamber 10 feet 6 by 6 feet 6 ; there was no hypocaust beneath it, it was therefore not warmed. The floor had been covered with a tessellated pavement, portions of which (*aa*), composed of coarse tesserae of dark reddish sandstone, about $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch square, remained in the north-east and north-west corners ; the central part of the pavement had been destroyed, but it was probably not of an ornamental character, as no small tesserae were found. In the middle of this room was a heap of stones mixed with clay, which had undergone the action of fire. At the south side of this chamber was the cold bath, a tank 10 feet 6 inches long, 5 feet 6 inches wide, and 3 feet deep, extending the entire width of the room, and sunk down below the floor. At the edge of the tank a dwarf wall (*b*) rose about nine inches above the pavement of the room, and served as the back of a seat (*c*), which was formed in the thickness of the wall along the tank, for the convenience of the bathers. This bath was found in a very perfect state ; it was lined with red stucco, which remained uninjured. It had been paved at the bottom with flag-stones bedded in concrete, but these had been removed, with the exception of two fragments at the corners (*dd*). The stucco all round the bottom of the bath was moulded into a quarter round,

GROUND PLAN.

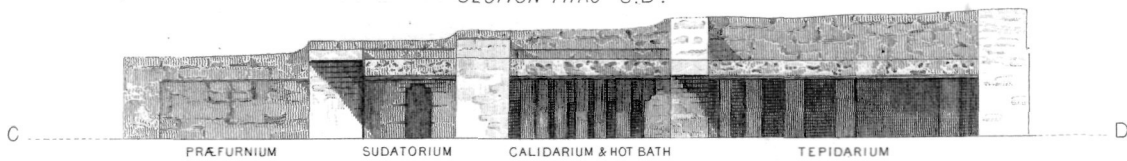
PAVEMENT
discovered in 1777.
M



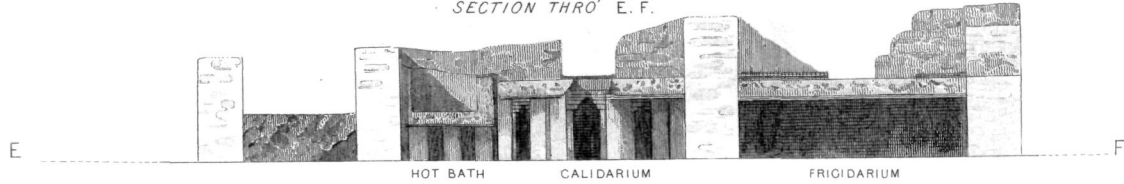
SECTION THRO' A.B.



SECTION THRO' C.D.



SECTION THRO' E.F.




A. Bassett del.

J. Bastin sc.

ROMAN BATHS, CAERWENT.


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 of two inches wide, forming a kind of skirting, and this was the case round the floors of all the doorways and apartments. At the bottom of the bath was a hole (*e*) through the wall, by which the water was let off. On examining the exterior of the wall there was no drain found; the external aperture was probably on the then level of the ground, and the water flowed away by an open gutter.

The Apodyterium (D), the dressing-room to the baths, was entered from the frigidarium by a doorway in the centre of the wall. It is 10 feet 6 inches wide by 13 feet 3 inches in its entire length. The end of the room opposite the door of entrance terminates in a segment of a circle, which was formed into an alcove by two projecting piers. The floor had been supported on square sandstone pillars above the hypocaust by which it was warmed, as Pliny describes the apodyterium of his bath to have been. This apartment had once been ornamented with a tessellated pavement, as many fragments were found. Of the hypocaust a description will be given when we trace the course of the flues.

A doorway, 2 feet 6 inches wide, on the sill of which the tesserae of sandstone which formed the pavement still remain, opens into the Tepidarium E, a room, as we shall see, of a warmer temperature than the last: its dimensions were 12 feet by 13. The tessellated pavement with which it had been floored, and beneath which there had been a hypocaust, was utterly destroyed by the roots of a large apple-tree which was growing there, though some of the pillars remained *in situ*. Here were found two bone hair-pins, a bronze ring, and coins of Helena, Constantine, and Tetricus.

The Caldarium, F, is entered from the tepidarium by a doorway 2 feet 6 inches wide, on the sill of which, as in the last, the coarse sandstone tesserae still remain, and in the angle of junction of the upright jamb with this pavement is a quarter-round skirting of stucco. This caldarium, which is 13 feet long by 7 feet 6 inches wide, is the most curious and interesting of all the chambers, for here is the warm-water bath, G, which, on the rubbish being cleared away, was found as it originally existed. This is a tank, 6 feet by 3 feet, sunk in the floor at the west end of the room, and its depth was 2 feet. The whole chamber was heated by a hypocaust, which extends underneath the bath, three sides of which are surrounded by upright flues proceeding from it. These flues at the two ends of the bath are formed with four of the usual square flue-tile pipes, with

 small lateral openings communicating with each other, whilst at the side half-tiles are employed. These tiles are fastened to the wall by T headed nails, some of which yet remain *in situ*,

performing their office. The tank itself is formed by a thick lining of fine concrete or stucco, of a red colour, attached to these tiles. The roof of the hypocaust, underneath the bath, consists of large red tiles, supported on stone pillars, and the bottom of the bath itself of one large paving-slab, set in concrete, having the usual quarter-round skirting. On the south end of the bath, on the level of the bottom, is the hole (*g*) by which the water was let out. This hole, which passed between the flue-tiles, seems at one time to have leaked, and to have been clumsily repaired by a large rough patch of the stucco.

The edge of the bath towards the room is about 4 inches higher than the sill of the entrance-door; a portion of it, 8 inches in width, remains. No tesserae were found here; the floor was therefore probably of the same red concrete or stucco as the bath, and, indeed, might have been a continuation, having a gradual slope towards the tank, in which case the room must have been entered by a step. This stucco is deserving of particular attention, for it was the interior lining of the bath, and must have had the quality of resisting the action of hot water to a very considerable degree, if not entirely. It seems to be composed, like concrete, of lime and pulverised brick, the facing being very fine in its grain, and in both the baths had been coloured red. It is not improbable that this colour may have been mixed with wax, or some fatty substance, and so have mechanically filled up the pores of the stucco, and also resisted the action of water by its greasiness, and if no soap or alkaline substance were used would last some time, and could easily be renewed. The wall of the opposite end of the room seems also to have been warmed with flues, as a square flue-tile still remains in the corner (*h*), and the plaster of the wall still bears the impress of the tile which had been fixed against it.

From the caldarium a narrow doorway, only 18 inches wide, opens into a small oblong apartment (*H*), only 8 feet long by 4 feet wide, which has no other outlet, and which I think may have been the Sudatorium, a chamber which was raised by a dry heat to a high temperature, which, from its close proximity to the mouth of the furnace, must have been the case here. The floor, now destroyed, under which was a hypocaust, if it were of the same thickness as the rest, must have been about 6 inches higher than that of the caldarium, from the pillars of the hypocaust being so much taller than those under the other rooms, in which case this room must have been entered by a step, but as the sill of the doorway is destroyed there is nothing to indicate its real level. If it were on the same level as its neighbour its substance must have been much thinner, and the room would sooner have reached its high temperature.

In a small area, inclosed by two walls (K), on the outside of this chamber was situated the Præfurnium (I), or mouth of the furnace, which heated the hypocausts of all these apartments. What now remains of it is a narrow channel, between two masses of wall 3 feet high (*i*). This was probably covered over, and the two blocks of stone (*k*) which still remain show that there had been some more buildings, and it is possible that there may have been some arrangement here for heating water. This channel, though only 18 inches wide where it passes through the wall at *l*, widens to nearly 3 feet at its mouth, the sides having to all appearance been burnt away by long-continued fire. Wood ashes and slag, or indurated clinkers, formed by the partial fusion of stones and earthy matters that may have got into the fire, which must have burnt fiercely, were found here.

We will now trace the flues and examine the mode of heating these apartments. The smoke and heated air from the præfurnium passed through an arched aperture in the wall at *l* into the hypocaust beneath the sudatorium; two dwarf walls (*m m*) which supported the floor above directed its main course into the hypocaust of the caldarium. In these walls, however, are lateral openings (at *n n*), through which currents passed into the small side chambers (*o o*), and thence through three other apertures also into the hypocaust of the caldarium. The pillars of the hypocausts were formed of roughly-squared pieces of sandstone, about nine inches square, and about two feet high,—those, however, under the sudatorium being taller, and those beneath the bath somewhat shorter. The roofs, when found, were of large square tiles, or slabs of paving-stone; and the floors above them were of concrete, 14 inches thick; they must therefore have required a long time to heat through, but once warm would long retain the heat.

The heated currents having entered the hypocaust of the caldarium, passed underneath the bath and ascended through the upright flues in the wall at the end and side, as also by those at the other end of the chamber. As the upper part of these vertical flues are destroyed, we know not how they terminated, but from the proximity to the præfurnium the heat must have been great; and that the fire, being of wood, was strong, and the draught rapid, would appear from several small pieces of charred sticks having been found in many of the vertical flues. From this arrangement it seems very probable that the bath itself was the actual vessel in which the water was heated, and in fact always kept hot. These particulars are curious and interesting, for I am not aware that any similar arrangements have been observed or recorded.

Four apertures (marked *q*) convey the heated currents from the hypocaust of

the caldarium into that of the tepidarium, which, having performed their office there, would pass through the single opening at *r*, under the apodyterium. No traces of vertical flues were found in these chambers, and their temperature was of course more moderate, being further removed from the source of heat. We have here four chambers of four different gradations of temperature heated by one furnace, by what I must consider a very ingenious, though a simple contrivance; and I think it shows that the Romans had made some progress in that art of warming their domestic buildings.

In the constructions of these flues no arches have been used, the apertures through the walls, except the first, being all covered by a series of horizontal overlapping stones, forming a pseudo arch, till at last one stone crowns the opening. There seems to me to be some practical science in this arrangement. A single stone might have cracked with the heat; but these overlapping stones would allow of expansion and contraction, and thus no displacement or fracture would occur. A problem to be solved is where the supply of water for the baths was procured, and how it was introduced. The brook is distant, and is dry in summer, and the village is now only supplied from wells, and that we must conclude was the source from which the Romans procured it. To have carried the quantity of water required for the baths through the chambers by hand would have been very inconvenient, and it is possible that there may have been some contrivance in the portions of the walls now destroyed for its introduction from the outside.

To clear this building entirely, and preserve it open, is in its present position impossible: I have, therefore, endeavoured to obtain from it all the information I could. With that view I caused to be made the accurate model now exhibited, which will be deposited and kept in the Museum at Caerleon; and with the model, plan, and sections, a faithful record of it will be preserved. Directions have been given for filling it in carefully, so as not to injure or destroy what is curious, and thus to preserve its existence for the gratification and information of future Antiquaries, should any desire to re-examine these curious remains.