



## Silchester

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## SILCHESTER.<sup>1</sup>

By GEORGE E. FOX, M.A., F.S.A.

In the following paper it is proposed to give a brief account of the remains of the Romano-British city at Silchester, as revealed by the various excavations made upon the site at different periods.

Putting aside some small attempts made in the last century, and the premature uncovering of part of the baths near the south gate in 1833, the account will be based: 1st, upon the excellent survey of the spot by Mr. Maclauchlan, and on his communications published in the *Archæological Journal*<sup>2</sup> in 1851; 2nd, on the extensive operations carried on by the late Rev. J. Gerald Joyce, between the years 1865 and 1873; 3rd, on the continuation of those labours by Mr. F. G. Hilton Price, F.S.A., and Mr. Joyce's successors, at various times up to the year 1884; and lastly, on the reports of the excavations carried on from 1890 to 1894 under the superintendence of an Executive Committee of the Silchester Excavation Fund, by whom the site is being thoroughly and systematically explored.

It may fairly be said that until the work was undertaken under the auspices of the Society of Antiquaries, these excavations had not been conducted on any settled plan, or at any rate with any other idea than the exploration of detached buildings, and although considerable light on certain points was obtained, the general character of the city and the relation of one part to another still remained obscure.

Much during the last four years has been done to trace out the arrangement of this Romano-British city, but there still remains much to do. It is to be hoped that the importance of these excavations in spreading a knowledge of the period of the Roman occupation of Britain

<sup>1</sup> Read at the London Meeting of the Institute.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. viii., pp. 227—246.

may be sufficiently understood by the public, so that contributions will be forthcoming to enable the Excavation Fund to carry through the work begun at Silchester in 1890, until the whole site has been thoroughly and exhaustively examined. As yet less than a half of the city has been so explored.

The discoveries made by Mr. Joyce and Mr. Hilton Price are recorded by those gentlemen in papers contributed to the 40th, 45th, and 50th vols. of *Archæologia*; and the reports of the Executive Committee of the Excavation Fund for the last four years are to be found in Vols. 52, 53 and 54 of the same publication.

With these few words of preface, I will proceed to my subject.

The city, which we will call *Calleva Atrebatum*, had an existence before the Romans landed in Britain, not as the permanent dwelling-place of civilised men, but as the chief fortress, or place of refuge, of the Belgic tribe of the Atrebates. There, on the high land, sloping southwards from what is now the southern border of Berkshire, and at a distance of about eight miles from the present town of Reading, possibly as long ago as the century preceding the Christian era, the half-savage inhabitants of the district surrounded a space of a hundred acres with a mound and ditch, conforming, as all Celtic tribes did, to two principles in the construction of the work: the one, the choice of a site, whenever obtainable, possessing a wide outlook; the other the turning to advantage of all the natural features of the ground which would render the chosen position easy of defence and difficult of attack.

For these reasons the space enclosed by the lines of the Atrebates, which was afterwards to contain a Roman town, assumed the form of an irregular octagon. On the east and north-east protection was afforded by the rapid slope of the ground, and on the south by marshy flats, but on the north and west, where the land was level, the *oppidum* was further strengthened by a second line of entrenchment at a short distance from the first. This outer barrier can still be traced, but does not appear to have been utilised in the Roman period. At its eastern end the inhabitants of the Roman city in after times constructed their amphitheatre.

So much for the fortress of the *Atrebates*. Its stockaded mounds, for they were probably furnished with stockades, played an important part in moulding the form of the future town which grew up or was, with more likelihood, laid out within them.

It is impossible to discover now what were the beginnings of the Roman town, or when the surveyors laid out the site within the Celtic embankments. One fact seems to show that this laying out took place at a comparatively early date in the Roman occupation

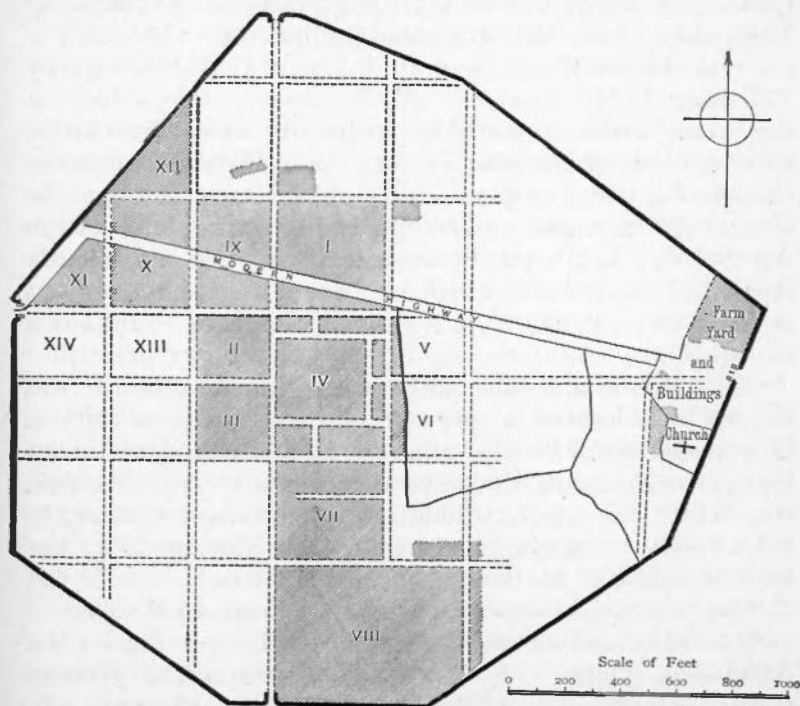


FIG. 1. PLAN OF THE ROMAN CITY AT SILCHESTER, HANTS, SHOWING PORTIONS EXCAVATED UP TO DECEMBER, 1894.

of the country, viz. that as far as the exploration has proceeded, no foundations have been found running beneath the streets or roads, and that all the buildings yet discovered lie either within or along the edges of the square plots into which the site is divided by these roads. The roads are not made over former buildings as far as

has yet been seen, which would certainly have been the case had any great rectification in the plan of the town been made supposing that it had grown up irregularly.

A reference to the plan, Fig. 1, will show that a main line of road was drawn from the north to the south gate of the city and that another line crossed it from east to west. This road, starting from the west gate did not touch the east gate, which lay somewhat to the south of its eastern end. It should be observed that these lines divided the site into unequal quarters; the line running north and south was considerably to the west, and the line passing from east to west was much to the north of the true centre of the area.

It is probable that when the Roman surveyors laid out the town within the Celtic enclosure, these lines were existing lines of roadway joining the original entrances of the *oppidum*, and were taken by them as guiding lines for setting out the area. The direct line however, between the Celtic east and west entrances, was apparently corrected from its sloping course across the camp to make it fit with the rectangular divisions of the Roman surveyors.

The whole site, taking the lines mentioned as guides, was cut up by streets or roads at right angles to each other, into a number of blocks or *insulae*, in and round which the houses were built, the largest and most central block, that which lay west and south of the intersection of the main roads, being occupied for the most part by the public buildings, the *forum* and *basilica* of the city.

The roadways appear to have consisted of a bed of very hard gravel, having a pitching of flints in the centre, forming a gutter. As far as at present seen, there do not seem to have been any drains or sewers beneath the roadways, except in the main street from the *forum* to the east gate, the rainfall having been carried away in the simple manner described; nor are there any signs of drainage from the houses.

The width of the streets varies; the broadest yet found is 28 ft. 6 in. wide.

We will now pass from the consideration of the general plan of the city to that of its defences.

It is possible that for some time the inhabitants of the

growing town were satisfied with the protection afforded by the Celtic entrenchments within whose shelter their habitations lay. Perhaps, however, even early in the period of the city's existence, the necessity was felt for a stronger bulwark, and in consequence the wall of enclosure was built, the ruins of which are still to be traced all round the site. The Celtic mound was utilised, the external face being cut down and the masonry built against it; in this way, following the early methods of construction in Roman military works, mounds being not uncommonly thrown up against the inner face of camp walls. In this instance, as they already existed, they were turned to account.

The wall thus built against the scarped Celtic embankment was 9 ft. 6 ins. thick at its base, lessening by sets off on its inner face to 7 ft. 6 ins. towards the top. In height it could not have been less than 20 ft. It resembles the walls of many other Roman camps and cities in construction, being composed of rubble, but with the exception that the usual tile courses are here supplied by lines of flat stones.

At intervals, averaging 200 ft. along the whole course of the wall, are what look like internal buttresses. These are formed by carrying up the full thickness of the masonry (9 ft. 6 ins.) from the bottom. The breadth of these buttresses is usually 12 ft. It is conjectured that these masses of masonry formed the bases of mural turrets, giving a command of the rampart and a wider outlook over the ditch than could be obtained from the battlements. Towers of small proportions, internal to the walls, and without external projection, arranged in a somewhat similar manner, occur in the stations on the Northumbrian Wall, and towers internal to the wall are known to have existed in the Roman fortifications of York. A flat space, called a berm, ran at the foot of the great mural barrier, and beyond it the original Celtic ditch, which was possibly remodelled as to width and section.

A length of nearly two miles of this huge turreted wall was required to defend the town, and it gives a high idea of the energy and wealth of the inhabitants of the Roman city that they should have been able to carry through such a work, when we consider the difficulty of

carriage of the mass of material required for it, and the time which must have been occupied in its construction.

It has been already mentioned that the city had four gates, north, south, east, and west. There was a fifth leading to the amphitheatre which lay without the extreme eastern corner of the city, but as this was a mere postern it needs no description. All four gates, as already suggested, doubtless occupied the gaps left in the Celtic mound for entrance to the original fortress; but as these gaps were of considerable width, the Roman gates were built within them and the slope of the mounds filled in with earth up to the masonry.

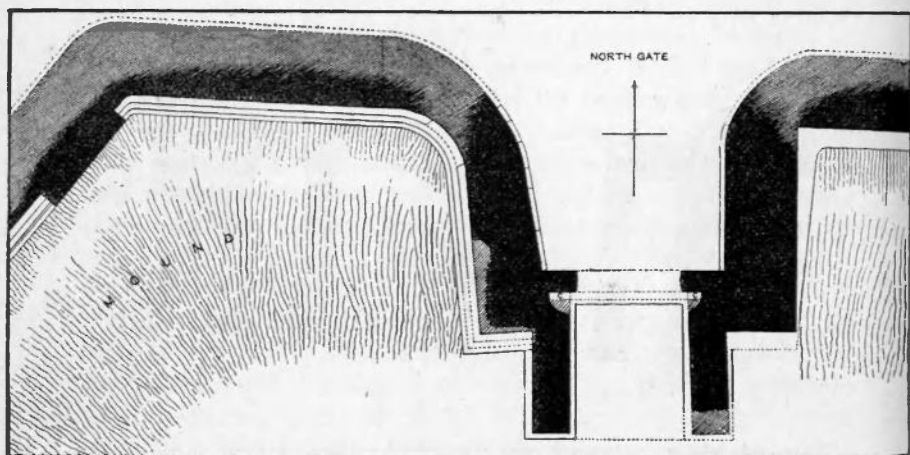


FIG. 2. PLAN OF THE NORTH GATE AND ADJOINING SECTION OF WALL.  
(For scale, see plan of West Gate.)

Both the north and the south gates were single ones, alike in design and of very nearly equal dimensions. In both, the city wall returned inwards the whole thickness of the mound, thus setting back the actual gateway in a kind of passage from 24 to 28 ft. deep. This return of the wall, backed as it was by the mound, afforded a good flanking defence to the gate and gave space for platforms of sufficient dimensions for placing *balistæ* of considerable size to command the approaches. The actual gateway, as mentioned, lay at the end of the open passage way and consisted of two parallel walls 12 ft. apart and 17 ft. long, perhaps covered by a barrel vault.



The semi-circular arch of entrance was closed by folding doors hung on pivots, which, below, turned in a wooden sill embedded in the roadway of the gate. No guard rooms were found at either gate. (See Fig. 2.)

Both recent and former discoveries showed that the eastern and western gates were practically alike in design, though differing considerably from the north and south gates. The road crossing the city from east to west was evidently of more importance than that from north to south, a greater amount of traffic passed along it, and in consequence the gates upon it were of larger dimensions. Each was double, consisting of two arches of the same

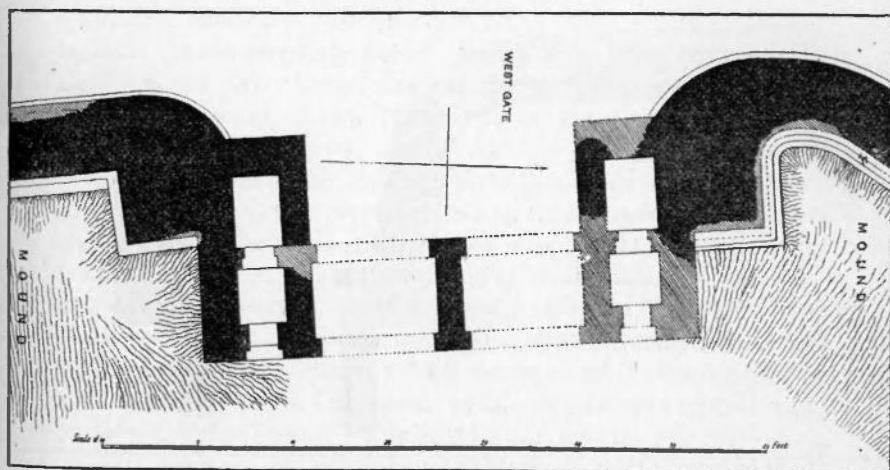


FIG. 3. PLAN OF THE WEST GATE.

span, side by side, with a dividing wall to receive the wooden roofs of the gate passages, the width of which very nearly coincided with that of those of the north and south gates. On each side was a guard chamber and lock up. (See Fig. 3.)

In the excavation of the west gate the same arrangement was found for a wooden sill as in the north and south gates, but with the addition of a cavity piercing the dividing wall behind the gateways, evidently a provision allowing for the withdrawal of the sills when decayed in order to replace them with sound ones. At the same time the iron pivot of one of the doors, with the



iron strap for fixing above it to strengthen the woodwork, was turned up in the rubbish, thus revealing very clearly the method of hanging the doors, and even the thickness of one of the valves.

The double gates were not set back as deeply from the line of the city wall as the single ones previously described. The curve of the wall inward was very slight, and although the projection of the guard chamber on each side of the double arched opening probably formed towers affording a certain amount of flanking defence, as a military work these gateways were of no great strength. The passage across the ditch at all the entrances was in all probability by a narrow causeway. At some late period in the existence of the city the southern archway of the west gate was rudely blocked by a rough wall of uncut stones, piled over architectural fragments from some large building in the town which must have been already in ruins.

After thus briefly sketching the defences of the city, it is now time to turn to its internal arrangements. As before stated, the whole area within the walls was cut up into rectangular divisions of varying size by gravelled roadways. Within and around these divisions, or *insulæ*, the houses were built. In four *insulæ*, and in portions of others which have come under notice, continuous lines of walling appear to have bounded the roads. The aspect of the streets must therefore have been somewhat monotonous, though gables and lines of roofing of the houses, and here and there a shop, or the doorway of some large mansion, would break the line of dead walling. Perhaps for a space here and there wooden palings replaced this walling, affording a glimpse into the gardens and yards attached to the various buildings. Between and behind the houses was a considerable amount of open ground, used for all the variety of purposes that may be observed in any country town of the present day. It is from the rubbish pits in these areas that the Silchester collection of antiquities in the museum at Reading has received its best specimens. Some of these pits were used as latrines by the inhabitants of the neighbouring houses. Wells, too, are found in these open spaces, and are the only source of water supply as yet discovered ; though

it is possible there was a certain amount of storage of rain water from the roof of the houses. Of this, however, nothing certain can be ascertained. The courtyards round which the larger habitations were built may have contained gardens, and the spaces were in part filled by dependent buildings of wooden construction.

The planning of the *insulæ* varies very much. In *Insula I.* three of the corners were filled by considerable houses. In *Insula II.* houses were found at all four corners, though the south side appeared almost a blank. In *Insula III.* the buildings facing the street on the east side joined each other, while on the west and north sides only a few traces were to be found, possibly because on these sides the structures were of an inferior character. In *Insula VII.* they lay nearly all on the west side. In *Insula VIII.* they were disposed over the whole area, and in *Insula IX.* were very irregularly placed. Indications of rebuilding have been met with also, in the lines of various foundations of early date, at slightly different angles from the direction of the roadways, but always within the boundaries of the respective *insulæ*.

Although as yet only seven *insulæ* have been examined, with parts of five more, the remains of the houses within these enable us to see that all the examples, up to the present time, fall into two categories. The larger houses constitute the first of these. They are invariably built round three sides of a courtyard, which is lined by ambulatories or corridors communicating with ranges of chambers behind them. These again are sometimes backed either by another corridor, or by a line of narrow rooms taking a similar form. For convenience in describing them, these houses may be said to belong to the courtyard type.

The houses of the second category consist of a range of chambers with a corridor of communication on one or other side of them, sometimes on both. They may be distinguished as belonging to the corridor type.

All the habitations yet found fall into one or other of these two classes, although from the addition of a chamber here, or the omission of a corridor there, the main plan may be somewhat obscured. For examples side by side of each class see Fig. 4, House No. 1, and House No. 2.

The ground plans of both kinds of houses are perfectly clear, but the superstructures must remain more or less conjectural. If, however, we can, to a certain extent, build up the superstructure from the ground plan, it would follow that in the larger habitations, with certain exceptions, it is doubtful whether there was any storey above the ground floor. The width of the corridors, back and front, would prevent the chambers between from receiving a sufficiency of light by means of windows looking into those corridors. We are therefore driven to the supposition that the roofs of the corridors were kept

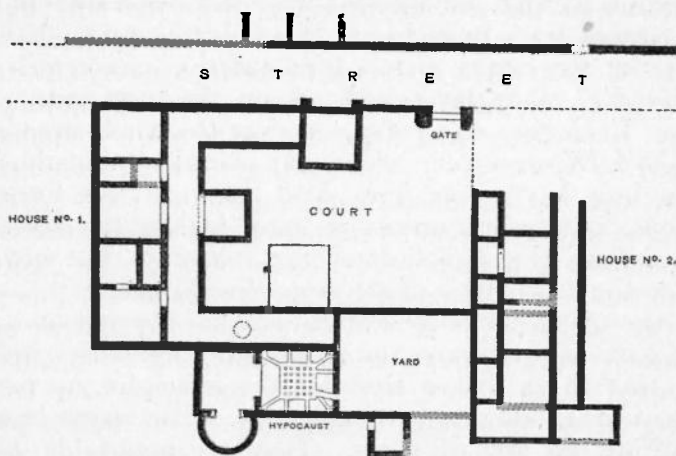


FIG. 4. PLAN OF TWO ADJACENT HOUSES IN INSULA VIII.

No. 1 of the courtyard type; No. 2 of the corridor type.

(Scale, 60 feet to an inch.)

low, so that the chambers behind them might be lighted by windows above those roofs. Where such an arrangement prevailed it is probable that there was no story above the ground floor. This, however, would not be the case where the range of chambers had a corridor only on one side of it, as then these chambers could be lighted by windows on the opposite side. In all probability houses of the second category, at any rate those with only one corridor, had an upper floor, and an upper floor might have been constructed over parts of the larger habitations, but it should be noted that these latter from their extent, and the number of the rooms, scarcely required such an addition.

The excavations at Silchester have established the important fact that the type of dwelling in the Roman towns in the north of the Empire differed completely from that in the cities of the south, in the countries bordering the Mediterranean. An examination of the latter shows at once that the aim of the builder in those countries was to combat, as far as possible, the excess of light and heat; in these northern regions damp and cold were the enemies to be guarded against. In the south, the principal chambers had wide openings to receive every breath of air, and were at the same time carefully planned that no direct ray of the sun might enter them, the only light allowed being a reflected one. In the Roman house as seen at Silchester, the openings to the rooms were covered by corridors, for the most part closed; and all dwellings of any importance had two, or even more chambers warmed by hypocausts. The lighting too must have been direct, and not obtained from under the roofs of the corridors, unless it is to be supposed that the inhabitants were content to live in a cellar-like gloom for the greater part of the year. In examining the houses of the Roman town at Silchester, it should be understood that we are not merely working out a problem which has been solved a hundred times before, but we are gathering new facts bearing in an important manner upon the habits and modes of life in the Romano-British period of our history.

Hitherto this narrative has dealt principally with the private buildings of the city, but those of a public character now demand attention.

No city with the least tinge of Roman civilization would have been without its baths, private and public. Of the former, at Silchester, there are no traces, but of the latter, the possible relics of one establishment, and the certain remains of another, have been unearthed. The fragmentary foundations at the south-east corner of *Insula III.* showed a combination of chambers, which had the appearance of a set of baths, possibly belonging to a private proprietor whose house was close by, and who let them out for public use.

Another establishment in *Insula VIII.* near the south gate of the city, and adjoining an extensive square of

buildings, perhaps an inn (*hospitium*), is a good specimen of Roman *balneæ* (fig. 5). From its comparatively small size, it was probably only a necessary adjunct to the neighbouring *hospitium*, and if so, the public baths of the city have yet to be found. It appeared to have had two entrances, one being by a long vestibule on the north, having the latrines at its eastern end, the other by a corridor from the southern wing of the *hospitium*. This latter entrance led directly into the *apodyterium* (the undressing room), a handsome hall with a simple mosaic floor of red tile tesserae. Next to this hall, on the east, was the *frigidarium* with the cold water bath, and a room serving possibly as a store-room; beyond these again lay the *caldaria* and the *tepidarium*, and next to these a large chamber with deep rectangular recesses on its south side. The pillars of a hypocaust, and an ample furnace proved it to have been a large *sudatorium*. At the northern end of the *apodyterium*, beyond a small entrance hall, were two other chambers containing hot baths, and on the west side of the same hall, a square compartment floored with tiles, possibly the remains of a tank having to do with the water supply of this part of the building. The drains from the baths were traced eastward for some distance to a massive sluice gate in the city wall.

So extensive an edifice as that to which the baths just mentioned were attached can scarcely be passed over in these notes (fig. 5). Discovered and for the most part excavated by Mr. Joyce (who however did not publish any account of it) in 1876-77, it was plotted by the officers of the Ordnance Survey, and its exploration completed in 1893. The plan is that of a very large house of the courtyard type, but the size of the chambers warmed by hypocausts, the general disposition of the rooms, and other circumstances, make the supposition probable that the building was destined rather for public than for private uses, and that it may have been a *hospitium*, or place of public entertainment.

Of more importance than any of the structures yet named, in fact of the highest importance in any account of the city, was the group of edifices which occupied the larger portion of *Insula IV*. This *insula*, as mentioned, lay nearly in the centre of the city. Within its limits were

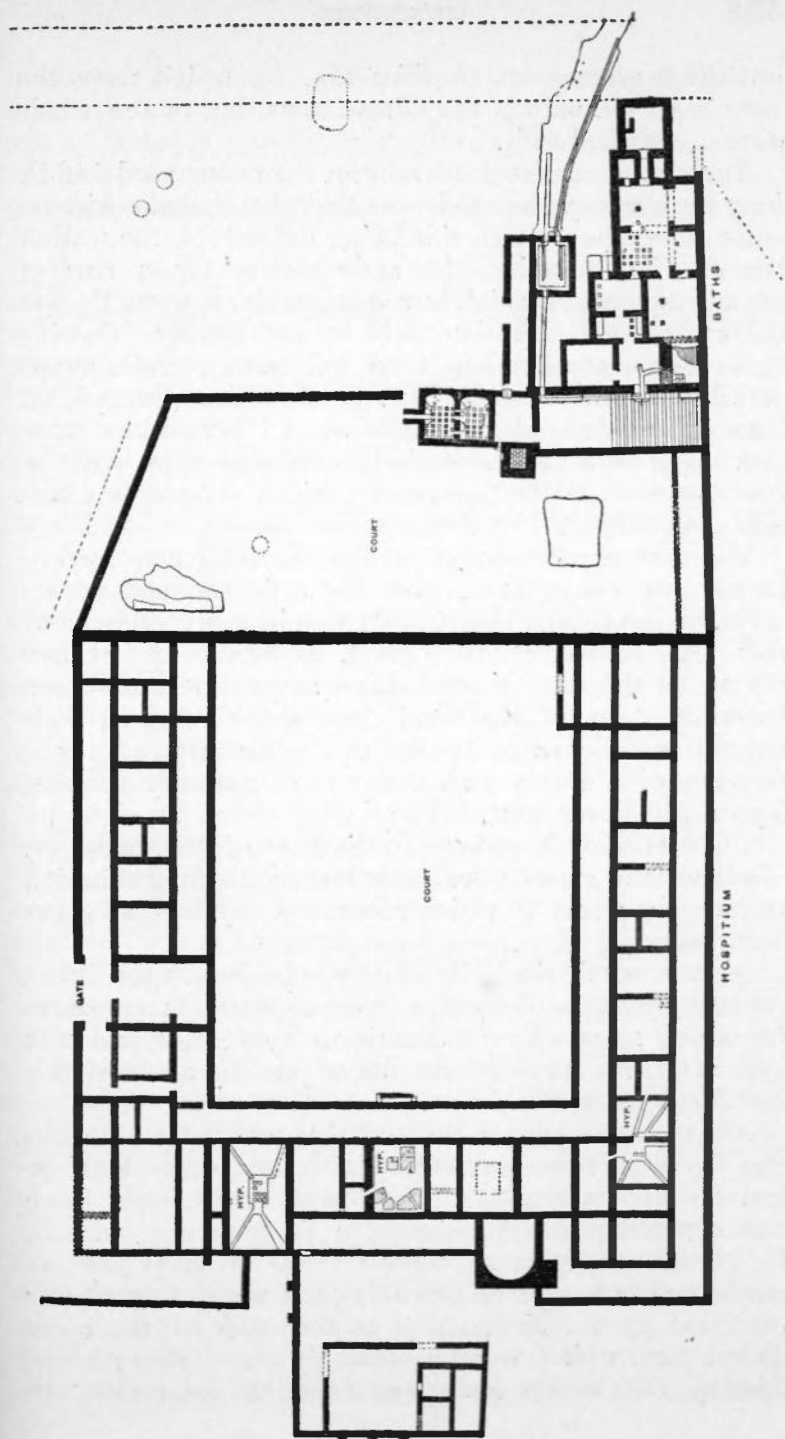


FIG. 5. HOSPITIUM AND ADJOINING BATHS IN INSULA VIII. (Scale, 60 feet to an inch.)

erected the *forum* and *basilica* (fig. 6), which were the very heart not only of the Roman town, but of the whole district attached to it.

The *forum* consisted of a large open courtyard 142 ft. long by 130 ft. wide. This was lined by ambulatories on three sides, the western side being formed by the wall of the *basilica*. Behind the ambulatories lay a row of chambers, most of which were rectangular in form, though there were some exceptions to be noted presently. Outside these ranges of chambers occurred another ambulatory, and it will thus be seen that the chambers were placed between two lines of ambulatories, an inner and an outer one. The roofs of these ambulatories were supported by columns with Attic bases, and capitals showing a variation of the Doric.

The rectangular spaces of the northern and eastern ranges are conjectured, from the articles found within them, to have been shops, and there is every probability that this conjecture is correct, especially as but few places for the sale of goods have as yet been observed elsewhere. In all likelihood these shops received their light from the ambulatories on either side of them, through wide fronts with counters of masonry running across the lower part. They were closed at night by shutters working in grooves in the front of these counters.

Above the shops were probably rooms for habitation or storage, access to which was gained by wooden stairs from below.

On the north side, the square chambers were interrupted by a semicircular recess, which may have contained seats where the citizens could rest and talk over affairs; a statue of the donor possibly adorned this useful adjunct to the *forum*.

About the middle of the east side was the main gateway to the *forum*. Here the inner and outer ambulatories were interrupted by erections which must have had something of the character of triumphal arches. Between them, interrupting the range of shops, was an ample vestibule, and on one side of it a space, probably occupied by a stair leading to the roofs of the inner ambulatory, which were presumably flat. Beneath the flooring of the vestibule was found a great drain of



Scale of Feet

STREET

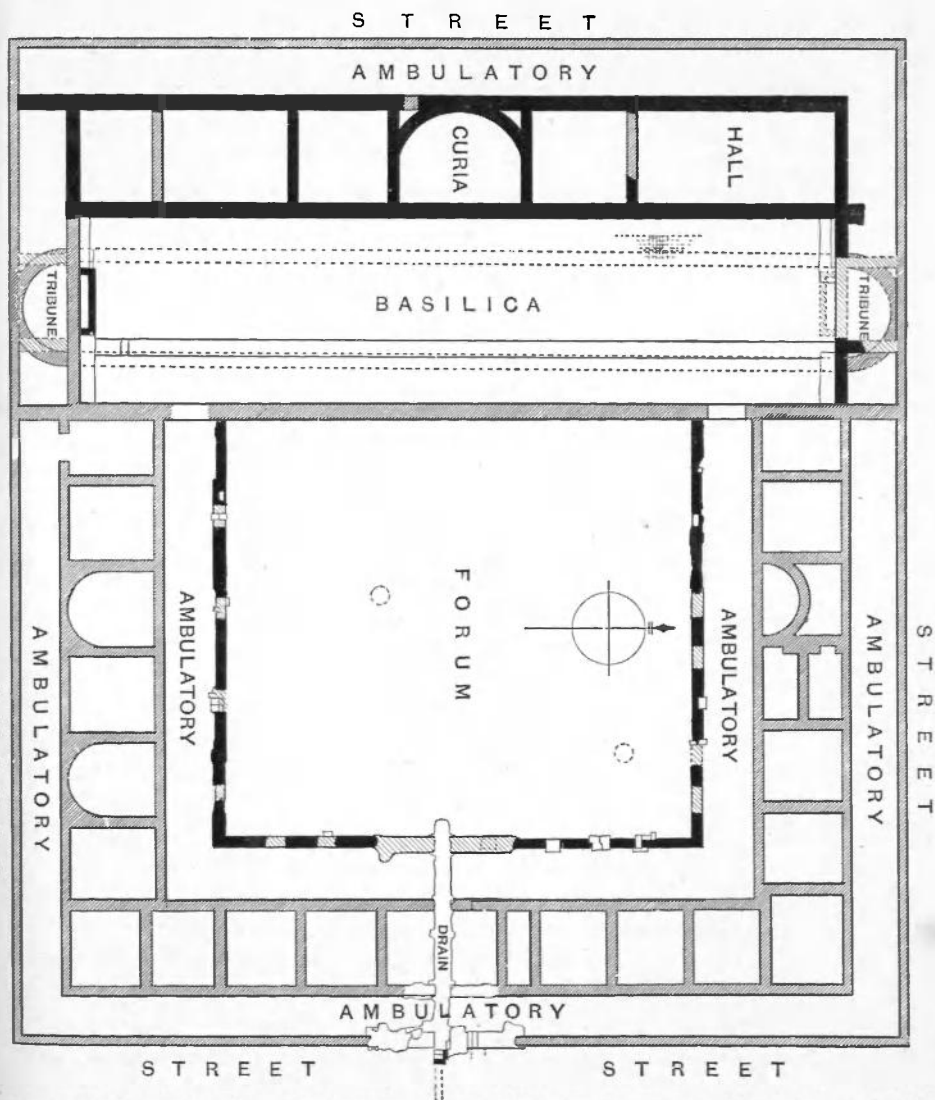


FIG. 6. THE FORUM AND BASILICA.

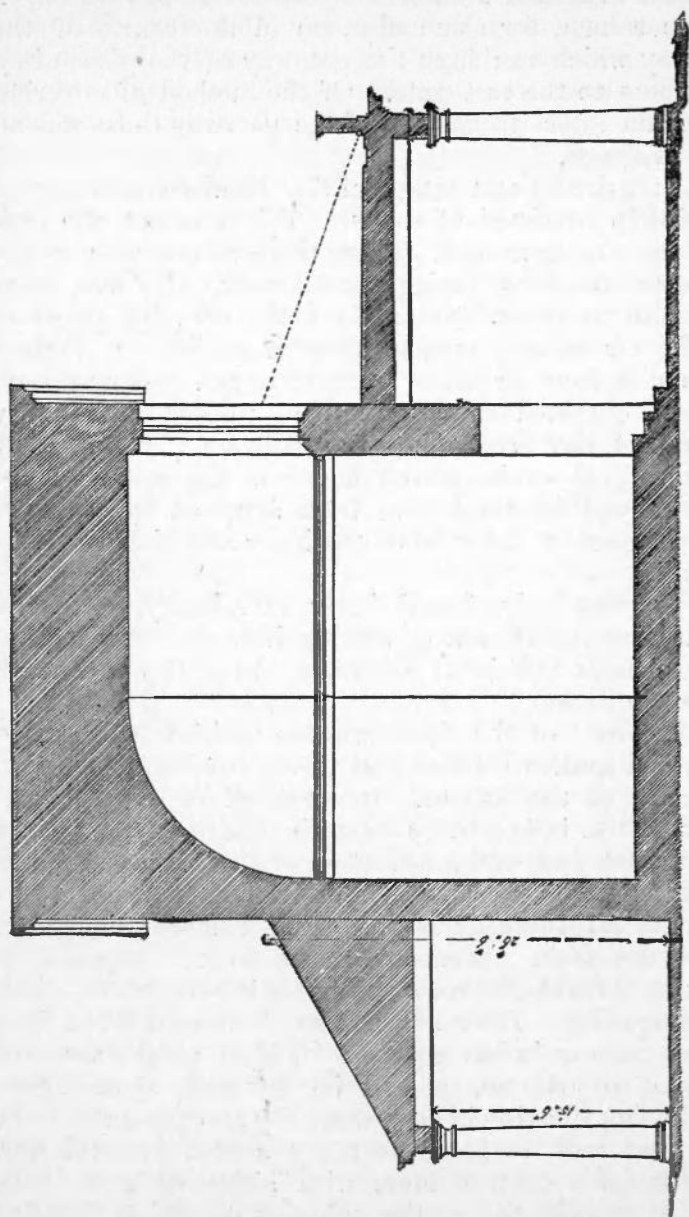
(The black lines show rebuilding, the shaded lines the earlier structures, and the single and dotted lines in the basilica the position of the earlier and later colonnades.)

massive masonry, which carried off the rain water from the open gravelled area of the *forum*. It was traced, as a deep trench, for some distance in the centre of the roadway which ran from the gateway of the *forum* in a direct line to the east gate. Of the method of covering this drain after its passage of the gateway there was no clear evidence.

The north and east ranges of the chambers of the *forum* principally consisted of shops. This was not the case with the southern one. Here three rectangular spaces alternate with two having apsidal ends. All five, there is reason to think, were offices, the meeting place of boards, or courts connected with police or finance. These chambers or halls were lofty and lit from above, as light obtained only from one or other ambulatory would not have sufficed. The diagram (fig. 7) giving a conjectural section through one of the apsidal halls, shows how this could have been supplied by windows looking upon the flat roof of the inner ambulatory of the *forum*.

At the east ends of each inner ambulatory, north and south, were the doorways leading into the *basilica*, and close to them additional entrances to the *forum* through ample vestibules.

To the west of the *forum* was the *basilica*, which stood north and south with its eastern wall forming the western boundary of the former. It consisted of a great hall about 270 ft. in length by 58 ft. in width, with a large apse at each end, and a still larger one, or rather a shallow apsidal chamber in the centre of its western side. The floors of all three apses were raised more than 2 ft. above the main pavement, access to the larger apse being by a flight of three steps extending the whole width of the opening. The north and south apses differed from the central one in having the floor level carried forward as a kind of tribune, access being by steps at each side, and the front having in all probability an open balustrade. The great hall, as large as many a mediæval minster, consisted of a central nave, with aisles on each side, divided by colonnades, the columns of which, judging from the few fragments left of them, must have been certainly 27 ft. high. The order was the Corinthian.



(Scale  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch to 1 foot.)

FIG. 7. DIAGRAM SHOWING PROBABLE WAY OF LIGHTING THE APSIDAL CHAMBERS OF THE FORUM AT SILCHESTER.

Over the entablature supported by these colonnades must be imagined a range of windows, for the *basilica* could not have been lighted in any other way. Allowing for the necessary height to be given to the windows of this clerestory, together with the height of the order, the total altitude of the hall within, from floor to roof, could scarcely have been less than 57 or 60 ft.

Another prominent feature in the internal aspect of the building was the central apsidal chamber. Owing to the height of neighbouring roofs it could only have been lighted from the *basilica*; and it is probable that to effect this the colonnades were interrupted to form a kind of transept in front of it.

If the great length of the building, and the position of the three apses, be taken into consideration it will be at once perceived that the edifice must have been intended to serve more than one purpose. Each apse is a centre, and it would be a justifiable supposition to look upon the central one, if we imagine it separated by a screen of columns from the main building, as the council chamber of the governing body of the city; the two others, north and south, as the tribunals of the magistrates; and the middle space, parted off by screens from the law courts at each end, as a place of assemblage for the citizens on occasions of public importance.

West of the *basilica* and north and south of the central apse lay various other chambers whose purposes we cannot now determine, and west of these again was an ambulatory lining the street from the north to the south gate, and coinciding in length with that of the *basilica* and its annexes.

Of the date at which the *basilica* was first erected, with its roofs rising high above the lower buildings of the city, we can form no exact estimate. The graceful leafage of the fragments of capitals from its colonnades indicates an epoch when the arts were at their best, certainly not later than the age of the Antonines, if so late. The wreck of the edifice, however, as found in the excavations of 1870, revealed the fact that the building had been twice burnt down; the first while the city was still sufficiently flourishing to be able to raise again its fallen walls; the

second, at some much later date when the destruction was final. The re-erection seems to have taken place at a comparatively late period of the Roman rule in Britain. The annexes were rebuilt on the old foundations, but the internal arrangements of the *basilica* proper were completely altered. Instead of a nave and two aisles, the space was redivided into one large nave and an aisle to the east of it. The foundation to carry the colonnade, or arcade, forming this aisle is yet plainly visible. By the new arrangement it was found that the colonnade would impinge on the apses at each end of the hall in very awkward fashion. The latter were therefore rebuilt with a rectangular plan within the semicircles of the older work, a bungling piece of planning indicating a period of decline in architectural art. The materials of the older structure were used up again, but as capitals for some of the columns of the new colonnade (or arcade) were wanting, rude and clumsy copies were made of the better work. A fragment of one of these copies remains. It served for many years as a horse-block in the farm-yard at Silchester.

In spite of the barbarous rebuilding, the edifice, even in its later form, must have had considerable stateliness. Its apses were adorned by linings of foreign marbles and its stuccoed walls were brilliantly coloured. Nor was the grace of statuary wanting to its adornment. Near the steps ascending to the central apse, the council hall of the municipality, were found the fragments of a figure larger than life, the head that of a female wearing a mural crown. Possibly this statue, placed in front of the entrance to the *curia*, may have represented the genius of the city. Broken in the first conflagration, it was patched together again, and erected by the inhabitants of Calleva in the new *basilica*, a fit image of a city which had seen its best days.

The mention of the guardian genius leads to the consideration of those edifices dedicated to the worship of the gods which might be expected to be found in any Roman town having some centuries of existence.

In all likelihood the circular or rather polygonal building whose foundations were discovered before 1873 in *Insula* VII., and re-examined in 1893, may have been

devoted to this purpose;<sup>1</sup> the remains discovered in 1890 were unquestionably those of pagan shrines. (Fig. 8.) These lie close to the parish church of Silchester, partly beneath the western side of the churchyard, partly beneath

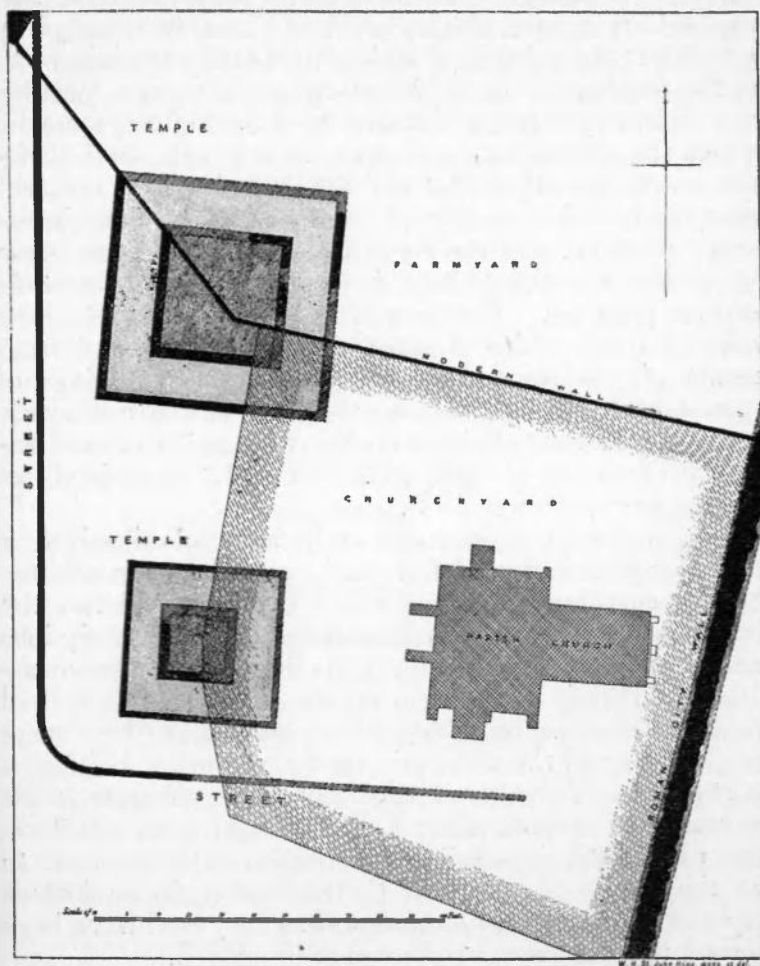


FIG 8. PLAN OF TWO TEMPLES NEAR THE EAST GATE.

the farm buildings, and not far from the site of the east gate. The church itself is a mediæval structure dating from the 12th century. Within a wall of enclosure were

<sup>1</sup> For full description of this building see *Archæologia*, liv. 206 *et seq.*

found two rectangular buildings standing north and south of each other about 50 ft. apart, the northern being the larger of the two. Each showed a *cella* or chamber, based upon a *podium* or platform, which in the northern building was over 7 ft. high. The *cella* of this latter building was about 42 ft. square, and had evidently been surrounded by a peristyle, the columns of which stood on the retaining wall of the platform. There was no appearance of a portico, nor could any trace be discovered of the flight of steps by which the doorway of the temple was reached. Both peristyle and *cella* had been floored with *opus signinum*, a cement composed of lime and small fragments of broken tile or other material. In the floor of the *cella*, fragments from the Purbeck beds had been incorporated, and the whole surface polished. The faces of the *podia* of both temples showed the remains of stuccoes coloured red, and fragments of the same material, apparently mouldings of panels probably ornamenting the walls of the *cellæ*, were turned up in the rubbish, together with pieces of wall linings of Purbeck marble. The width of the peristyle of the larger temple was 13 ft.

The smaller temple could only have consisted of a chamber (which was 24 ft. square) placed upon a podium but not surrounded by columns. It clearly had not the importance of its northern companion. No inscriptions were found to tell us to what gods the edifices were consecrated. It may be that the superstructures of both had been pulled down long before the cessation of the Roman occupation and the materials used up in other buildings. It should be remembered that more than a century must have elapsed from the date of Constantine's edict of toleration of Christianity until the time when Calleva ceased to be the abode of men, and that, therefore, in so long a lapse of years, the desecrated shrines may well have been turned to other uses, or altogether destroyed.

But as the temples of the pagan gods fell, so churches of the Christian faith arose. No discovery of greater interest could have occurred on the site of this Roman city, than that which took place in May of the year 1892. In the exploration of the lower half of *Insula* IV. the trenches driven southward from the south-east angle of the *forum* struck the foundations of a small apse with a



mosaic pavement. At first it was believed that the *tablinum* of a house at this corner of the *insula* had been uncovered, but as the work proceeded, unexpected lines of walls appeared, and when these were fully traced out, the form of a small Christian church of basilican type was clearly revealed. (Fig. 9.) The church lay east and west with its sanctuary at the west end, one of the proofs of its early date. It consisted of a nave with apsidal ending, aisles on each side, with rudimentary transepts north and south of the apse, and a *narthex* at the east end whose length coincided with the whole breadth of the church. Its diminutive measurements were as follow:—The nave, including the apse, was 29 ft. 3 ins. long, its width about 10 ft. The width of each aisle 5 ft. The transepts

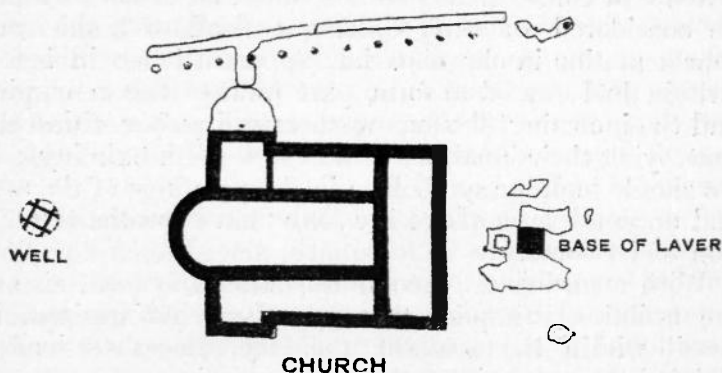


FIG. 9. PLAN OF AN EARLY CHURCH AND ITS SURROUNDINGS IN INSULA IV. (Scale, 30 feet to an inch.)

at the end of the aisles on each side of the apse, rather more than 6 ft. square, the northern one being parted off from the aisle by a thin wall, and the *narthex* at the east end was 6 ft. 9 ins. wide.

It is not possible to say how the nave was divided from the aisles, but the foundation walls for either piers or columns exist. The nave and the *narthex* had been paved with a mosaic of red tile tesserae, but no flooring was to be traced in the aisles or transepts. In front of the apse was a panel of finer mosaic, 5 ft. square, let into the ground of red tile tesserae. It was of simple design, black and white with a border of lozenges alternately red and grey, the grey being produced by means of Purbeck marble

tesserae. It was geometric in character, with no display of symbolism whatever. It clearly marked the place for the altar.

About 11 ft. to the east and in front of the church was a platform of tiles having behind it a shallow pit. It is conjectured that upon this platform stood originally the laver for ablutions, the pit behind it serving to receive the overflow from the vase; and about 20 ft. west of the apse of the building was a well in whose depths could still be seen a portion of the wood with which it was lined.

It has been questioned whether the building here briefly described was really Christian or not; objections have been founded on the absence of Christian symbols in the mosaic panel of its sanctuary, and in its small size. This absence of emblems may be accounted for if the structure be considered of early date, the flood of emblematic representation in churches having scarcely set in before Britain had ceased to form part of the Roman empire, and the incoming Teutons were ravaging her cities and destroying their inhabitants. In so small a building also we should look for symbolism in the paintings of the apse and upon the arch above it rather than upon the tessellation of its floors.

With regard to the second objection, the small size of the building, it implies that no other churches will be found within the area of the city, less than half of which has as yet been examined. It is scarcely to be supposed that this was the only church in Calleva.

In the mind of anyone acquainted with the researches of De Vogüé in the ruined cities of Central Syria, and with the records of explorations in the ruins of the Roman towns of Africa, no doubt will arise as to the character and uses of the edifice in question, and it would be a matter of surprise with anyone having such knowledge that the building should not at once be recognised for what it undoubtedly is, the first Romano-British church yet discovered. One curious circumstance seems to have escaped notice, which is the central position of the edifice. It is close to the *forum*, in the most frequented portion of the city, and as nearly as possible occupies its very centre. It seems evident, therefore, that the new faith had been firmly established among the pagan population,

and that all fear of outrage and violence had passed away before its walls were reared in a situation so conspicuous and so inviting to an attack.

With these few remarks on one of the latest and most interesting of the discoveries yet made at Silchester, these brief notes on the principal remains of the city which once was *Calleva* may fitly be brought to a close.

#### APPENDA.

Since this account was written, further excavations have been made at Silchester, and the *Insulæ* IX., X., XI., and XII. have been explored.

The buildings contained in *Insula* IX. were found to have been very irregularly disposed; while in the other *insulæ* named, the presence of walls and the wreck of small furnaces of circular form, in and about the remains of buildings, showed that a quarter of the town had been reached which was the seat of some industry, in all likelihood connected with dyeing.

Though not coming within the scope of this paper, two finds made in these *insulæ* may be mentioned here. From a well in *Insula* IX., into which it had been thrown, was brought up a stone carved with a long conical head set on a ring of mouldings resting upon a square base. The stone appears to have been sepulchral, for it bore engraved in two lines upon the conical portion an Ogam inscription, which has been read by Professor Rhys "(The Grave) of Ebicatus, son of Muco."<sup>1</sup>

The other discovery was that of a vase containing 252 silver denarii, ranging from Mark Antony to the Emperor Septimius Severus. Only one coin of this emperor was included in the hoard, and as this coin was in a very good state of preservation it may be concluded that the treasure was hidden early in this emperor's reign. Although hoards of money have been found at various times on the site, this is the most important one that has yet occurred.

<sup>1</sup> See *Archæologia*, liv. 233 et seq.