

Excavations, 1952

DEANERY FIELD, CHESTER.

THE main effort of the year was directed at a trench through the northern defences in the Deanery Field in order to establish the presence or otherwise of the Flavian turf rampart (c. A.D. 70-75), previously discovered on the west side and at the south-east corner. In this, the excavation was successful; part of the turf rampart was found standing to a height of 7 ft., but its front portion had been cut away during the reconstruction of the north wall in 1887. The back too had been reduced by about 3 feet for the insertion of a building. This unexpected feature could not be fully explored within the limits of the trench but it is clear that its construction had removed the greater part of the primary levels in the tail of the rampart. The building, which was 28 feet wide, appears to be similar to others found on this side of the fortress and presumably was used for the storage of fuel and other combustible material. No evidence was recovered by which it could be dated, but it was clearly a secondary feature. The main result of the excavation was the discovery of the turf rampart, which now makes it possible to say that from c. A.D. 70 to 300, the enceinte of the legionary fortress appears to have remained in the same position.

BRIDGE GATE.

A small scale excavation was carried out near the Bridge Gate in the yard of the Home Guard Club. The purpose of this was to make contact with the early mediaeval defences and if possible, to recover some examples of the pottery of that period. A heavy stone foundation was encountered and within the restrictions of the single trench, it was impossible to determine its limits or arrive at any conclusion as to its purpose. A quantity of interesting pottery was recovered of an entirely new local type. There is at present, some disagreement among authorities on this pottery but it seems probable that it belongs to the 13th century. The foundation may be an addition to the defences at this point, possibly under Edward I.

INFIRMARY FIELD.

Efforts were continued during the year to locate a Roman burial but without success. The cemetery area must be considerably more confined than was previously imagined. Further work was done on the Roman building found last year.

AMPHITHEATRE.

A short trench was excavated at the request of the City Engineer, to locate the outer wall of the amphitheatre, to enable the improvement line to be set out at this corner. No new information came to light.

C.W.

BUNBURY PARISH CHURCH SANCTUARY, INTERIM REPORT

FOR some time, the Sanctuary flooring of Bunbury Parish Church laid in tile by Minton of Stoke-on-Trent in 1849 had shown signs of giving way and in view of the laying of a new floor it was decided that the cause of the subsidence should be found before new work was commenced. The grave slab of the Rev. Thomas Porter, one time Preacher of Bunbury (and of his wife) was found beneath the top step of the altar and recovered in good condition although smeared with cement. Marble edged steps had been laid upon the encaustic tiles and the grave slab covered a hole which had been dug through them to examine the floor beneath, presumably because of earlier subsidence. This had been due to a large lead coffin bearing, beneath a skull and cross bones the inscription, G.D. Esqr., Aged 45, 1727. (George Davenport of Calveley). Alongside to the north was another lead coffin without inscription and to the west a very large one (7 ft. 8 ins. in length) having a lead coffin plate to Richard Davenport, 1771. There were also three more leaden coffins within the sanctuary, only one of which was inscribed (beneath skull and crossbones) F.P. 1726, in the south-east corner of the sanctuary near the double piscina. Scattered through the soil over the whole sanctuary and disturbed at various times, presumably when the soil was dug into for burials in the 18th century, were numerous fragments of 14th century glass, mediaeval tiles and pieces of alabaster little larger than chippings. The glass, about 160 fragments, appears to belong to the lost Jesse window which formerly occupied the east window. The alabaster fragments probably came from the missing Calveley tombs. A large portion of one of these, a broken slab, quite plain, measuring 4 ft. 11 ins. by 3 ft. $\frac{1}{2}$ ins. and $4\frac{1}{2}$ ins. in thickness, was found near the vestry door.

The most important result of the excavation was the discovery of a wall running parallel with the communion rail 12 ft. 6 ins. from the east wall. The wall was 4 ft. high and its top course was 1 ft. 9 ins. below the 19th century floor level. For 1 ft. 6 ins. the top two courses were of ashlar blocks mortared together and appeared to have been coated with a thin plaster as though older building material had been used. Beneath these were footings (on the south side) made up of nine moulded stones from a 12th century arch having a span of 6 ft. 8 ins., and one decorated voussoir of zigzag ornament with pellets, deeply cut. The footing of the south wall of the sanctuary (which had a well-built offset 12 ins. below the tile level) was also made up of earlier material, namely six large blocks of ashlar with a $7\frac{1}{2}$ ins. chamfer cut on the square, and which also had received a liberal amount of thin plaster or whitewash. They were built well into this wall and the east wall of the chancel on the south end.

Moulded or carved stones were not found in the north wall, only in the newly discovered wall running parallel to the communion rail. Unfortunately the northern end of this latter wall had been greatly disturbed by grave digging and it was not possible to determine the relationship between it and the wall on the south side which continues westwards into the chancel parallel to the Ridley Chapel screen and into ground which could not be disturbed. There were no apparent signs of bonding however where the walls might have joined. In the angle so formed were the remains of footings and one large well-cut stone which might have formed part of a buttress set at right angles to the north-to-south wall.

It remains to indicate the importance of these structural remains, but it is impossible to draw definite conclusions for the evidence is tantalisingly insufficient. This however coincides with the evidence already to hand in connection with the history of 14th century building at Bunbury. How much did Sir Hugh Calveley build, and how much did he inherit, are questions to which there is no satisfactory answer. The facts to be considered are as follows.

Until the early 18th century the east window contained 14th century glass commemorating David de Bunbury together with the date 1343. The east window follows the style of this period and also shows signs of having been reconstructed. Hugh Calveley is credited with this work however, but if he built *de novo* the existing east wall and window (indeed the whole chancel) in 1387 (the date of the licence to build) one must account for the earlier glass having survived in a later frame and also believe that Sir Hugh was using designs about 40 years out of date. This is not beyond the bounds of possibility for there are one or two examples of architecture in Cheshire which seem to indicate that the county was a little behind the times. Bunbury east window has been quoted as one of these examples and it might be possible to explode the other evidence on further research. One more piece of evidence ought to be taken into consideration, that culled from documentary sources. The will of William Walsham (proved 1389) directs 'to the fabric of the Church of Bunnebury and the repair of the Chancel 20 marks.' An earlier will dated 1361 of William Ketell leaves 'for the fabric of the Church of Bunbury 4s.'

We can only leave the matter with the question, did Hugh Calveley then inherit a large Church of the time of David de Bunbury and enlarge the chancel, rebuilding the east wall (and window complete with glass) 12 ft. 6 ins. to the east in order to accommodate the canons of his new foundation, and also to provide a more dignified setting for his own alabaster tomb?

M.H.R.



MALTBY CHURCH, LINCS., 1940.
Before Repair in 1940.



MALTBY CHURCH, LINCS., 1940.
After Repair in 1940.

BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANCIENT BUILDINGS.

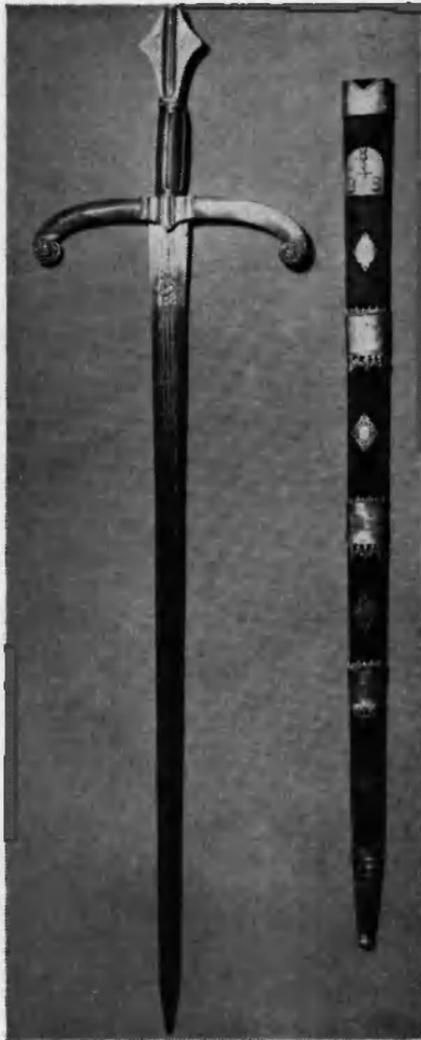


Fig. 1.

BLOCK BY COURTESY OF CHESTER CORPORATION.

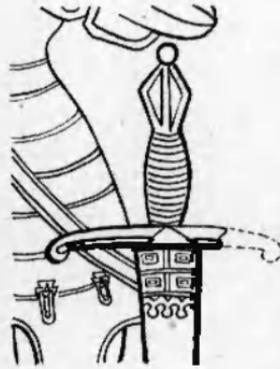


fig. 4



fig. 2



fig. 3