

ON A ROMAN HYPOCAUST DISCOVERED AT  
FOLKESTONE, A.D. 1875.

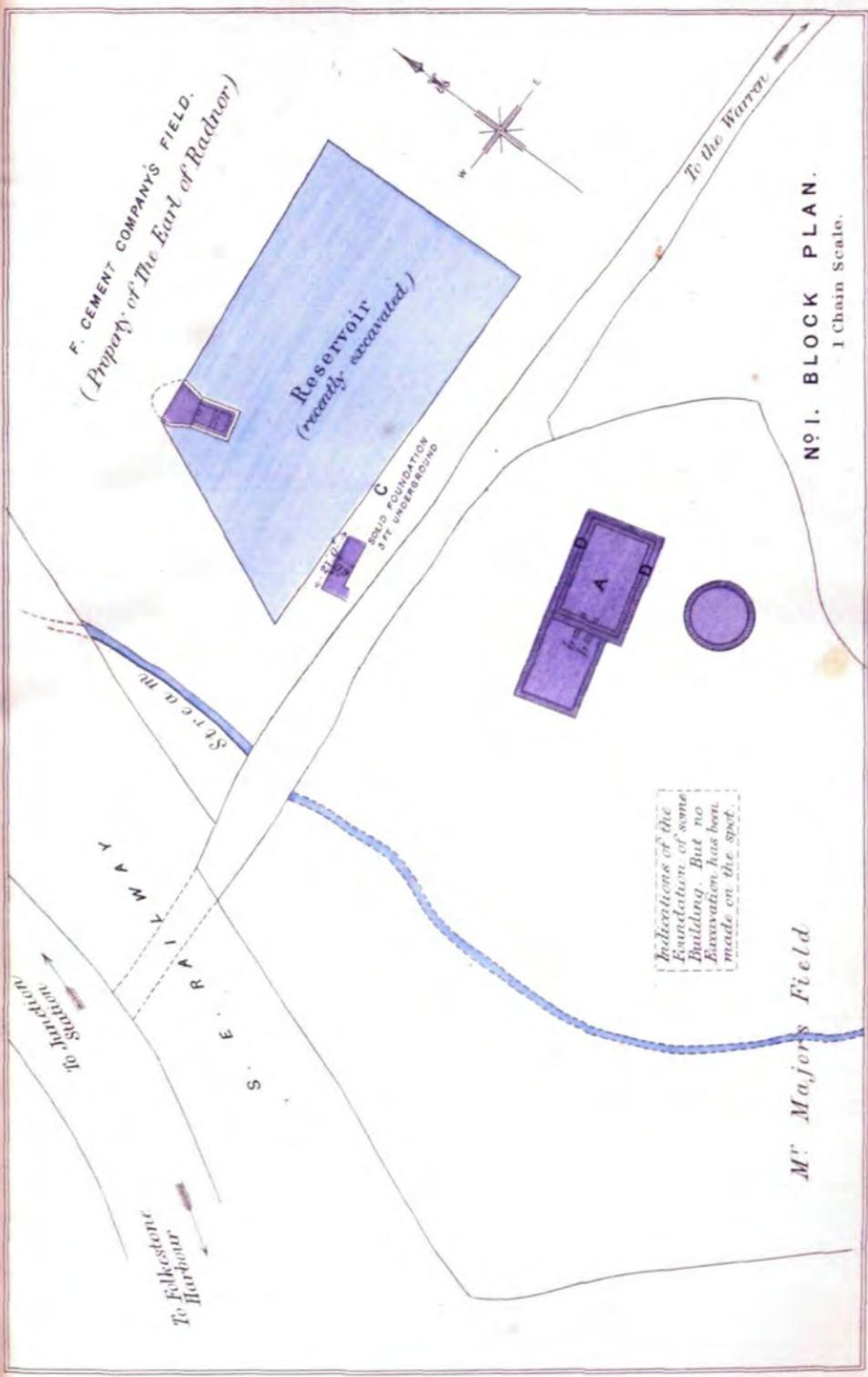
BY CANON R. C. JENKINS, RECTOR OF LYMINGE.

It will be within the recollection of those members of our Society who were at the meeting at Folkestone, that their attention was directed to the recent discovery of the foundations of a church or chapel, apparently of Romano-British origin, in a field adjoining the Upper Station, at the eastern end of the town. These remains of early building, through the kindness of the proprietor (Mr. Major, of Folkestone), were left open for some time, and an opportunity was thus given for their fuller inspection. Unfortunately no ground-plan was taken, so that the only record of them is in the memories of those who saw them during the period of their exposure. Since then they have shared the fate which usually befalls relics of antiquity in a rapidly increasing town. The foundation has been broken up, and removed for building purposes, and the ancient stones, covered with an almost imperishable concrete, will probably be hidden anew among the foundations of modern Folkestone.

By many this early religious foundation was supposed to be that of the Chapel of St. Botolph, respecting which various records still exist; but it is difficult, without further evidence, to identify it,

though the character of the masonry, in which Roman bricks of a large size were occasionally found as bonding courses, and the structure of the concrete, point to a very remote antiquity. Some skeletons were found entire in the very walls of the building (at DD). A similar indication of mural interment was observed in the walls, now destroyed, which formed the western extremity of the Basilical building at Lyminge. Indeed there was no slight resemblance between the concrete here found and the hardest of the white concretes still to be seen at Lyminge. The red concrete, however, was looser, and did not so decidedly exhibit the characteristics of a Roman mixture as that which is seen here. A few Roman coins were picked up by the workmen, and fragments of Roman pottery. The chamber marked A in the plan subjoined, had (as Mr. Major informs us) thicker walls than the adjoining one, and showed traces of an underground apartment, which was evidently approached by a flight of steps from the westward—the two projecting thin walls (bb) being probably built for its support. The internal facing walls of this chamber were well squared, showing that they were not simply foundations, but actual walls. This crypt (if we may so term it) was, according to Mr. Major's recollection of it, about eight feet below the surface. Mr. Petts, who had promised to take a plan of the building, mentions the existence of a connecting passage between the circular building and the apartment A.

The discovery of this important relic of Folkestone during the Romano-British period was followed during the present year by one of still greater interest. In the course of excavating a reservoir for the purposes of the cement manufacture now being success-



F. CEMENT COMPANY'S FIELD.  
(Property of The Earl of Radnor)

Reservoir  
(recently excavated)

B  
C  
SOLID FOUNDATION  
3 FT. UNDERGROUND

A  
D

Indications of the  
Foundation of some  
Building. But no  
Excavation has been  
made on the spot.

To Station

RAILWAY

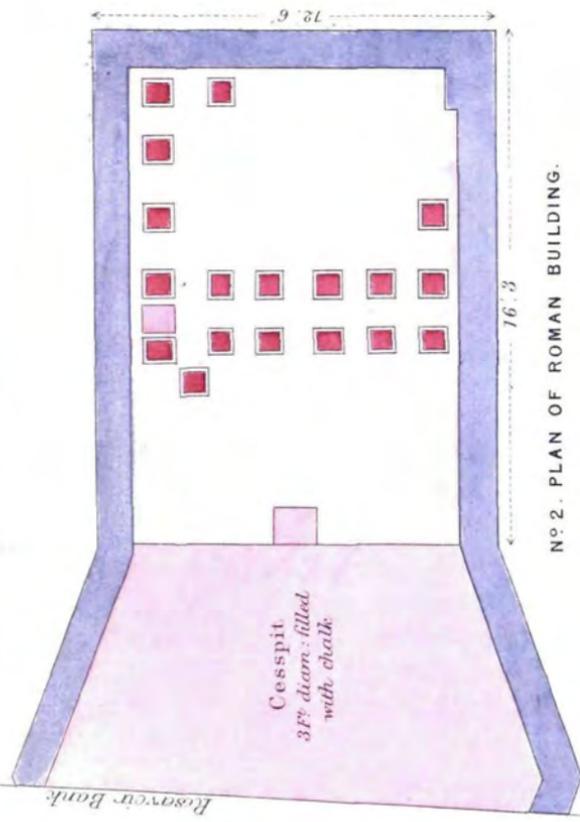
To Folkestone  
Harbour

To the Warren

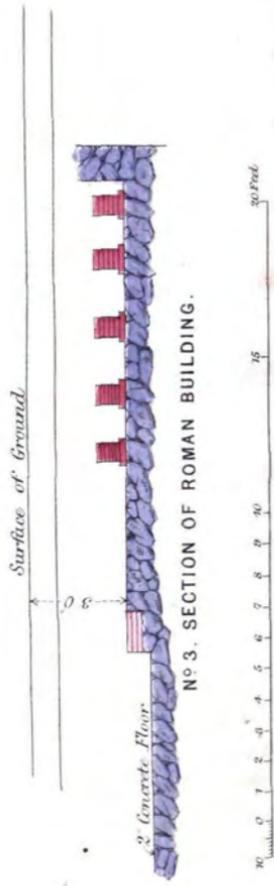
M. Majors Field

NO. 1. BLOCK PLAN.  
1 Chain Scale.

*Reservoir Bank*



N<sup>o</sup> 2. PLAN OF ROMAN BUILDING.



N<sup>o</sup> 3. SECTION OF ROMAN BUILDING.

fully carried on in Folkestone, the position of which was immediately adjacent to the "Chapel-Field," the scene of the first discovery, the foundations of a Roman bath were disclosed, the pillars of the hypocaust of which were nearly entire. The directions of the walls and drains were indicated with such clearness as to enable Mr. Thomas, to whom we are indebted for the preservation of these remains (though unfortunately no longer *in situ*) to record every line in the admirable plan which he has presented to our readers for the plates which accompany this paper. On the site were found several relics of Roman work, including a vessel of red pottery of good and bold form, and a long bone needle, both of which are now in the possession of Mr. Thomas.

The form of the hypocaust is so well given in the ground-plan, that much need not be said in explanation of it. We will merely therefore add a few words on the general object and form of the hypocaust, from the description of Vitruvius, as the text of that great authority may not be within convenient reach of some of our readers. A hypocaust is properly a kind of furnace or chamber, extending under the bath, divided by squared pillars (usually of Roman bricks of large dimensions, placed in thick beds of concrete), between which the hot air had full circulation—as Papinius writes (Sylvar. l. I.):—"Tenuem volvunt hypocausta vaporem." Cicero, accordingly, in one of his letters, terms it a "Vaporarium." The opening or mouth of the hypocaust was called the *præfurnium*, and here the fire was kindled, the vapour of which was designed to permeate the whole chamber. The pillars to sustain the pavement of the bath were placed at regular intervals. Sometimes these pillars were of equal

thickness throughout; in other cases they became larger towards the floor of the bath, as in the Roman baths at Saintes, of which M. de Caumont has given a view. This latter plan seems to be recommended by Vitruvius, in the words "supra laterculis bessalibus pilæ struantur, ita dispositæ uti bipedales tegulæ possint supra esse collocatæ. Altitudinem autem pilæ habeant pedum duorum . . . supraque collocentur tegulæ bipedales quæ sustineant pavementum" (l. v., c. x.) ("Let the columns be erected upon tiles eight inches long, so disposed that tiles of two feet in length may be placed above them. The columns should be two feet in height, and over them should be placed two-foot tiles to support the pavement.") This pavement he describes as laid with the trowel in concrete,\* and brought to a polish by a coating of fine plaster (*opus albarum*).

The general plan of the building will appear to the reader, who has observed the form of such remains in England and elsewhere, to be of the ordinary character presented by baths of Roman construction, while the position of it so near to the sea, and also to springs of fresh water, which appeared by various indications to have been turned to good account, could not be chosen more judiciously or more thoroughly in accordance with the almost instinctive skill of Roman builders. The remains here described will lead us to regret the large treasury of Roman work which has

\* This is, I think, the meaning of the words *testâ cum calce*. "Testa" has several meanings in Vitruvius. Baldus, in his learned notes, defines it to be "quicquid cretâ effictum igne decoquitur." As "testa" is used also for a brick, I think it must here mean that kind of concrete made with brick which is generally found in Roman substructures.

been lost to us through the inroads of the sea, and to read with a deeper meaning the words which describe the destruction by the sea and by the pagans, referred to in the earlier charters of Folkestone Priory.

We cannot close this brief sketch without expressing our sense of the obligation under which Mr. Thomas's careful and skilful researches have laid all who are interested in the early history of Folkestone. The only compensation which can be given for the destruction of such an interesting monument of the past is the faithful record of its discovery, and the representations (in this instance so perfect and artistic) of these last traces, now from sad necessity utterly effaced, of the Roman occupation of Folkestone.