

From "Bath Chronicle," 7th Feb'y. 1889.
With the writer's compliments.

PR 3-1/014

BATH ABBEY CHURCH.

To the EDITOR of the BATH CHRONICLE.

SIR.—The letter from "Civis" in your issue of the 31st ult., under the head of "Hampton-Down Camp," is mainly devoted to an attack upon that brief chapter in the "Handbook to Bath" which gives some account of our Abbey Church. His opinions on the style and value of it, as they concern himself only, do not claim any notice; but when he ventures to charge the writer with carelessness in its preparation, it is another matter. Let me assure him that here he is very wide of the mark: for no pains were spared in consulting and comparing all available authorities, and in trying to elicit the truth from their sometimes conflicting testimony. As an additional precaution against error, the MS. was submitted successively to the judgment of three men more or less familiar with the subject—one of whom, from his special knowledge, was eminently qualified to criticise it. They kindly favoured me with a few verbal commendations; but by neither of them (though particularly enjoined to be watchful in this matter) was a single mistake pointed out. I had, therefore, every reason for hoping that if any such should have been overlooked, they would be very few and very unimportant. So much as to carelessness.

But further: "Civis" broadly charges me with having "most hopelessly jumbled up the two restorations of 1833 and 1864-74;" and pounces upon three instances in support of his assertion. With one incidental exception, however, any seeming confusion of periods is chiefly due to the need for great conciseness of treatment having in some parts forced on the writer the use of expressions too short to be clearly descriptive. Hence, no doubt, a certain liability, here and there, to convey an obscure or even a wrong impression. It is thus with regard to the parapets and battlements. Doubtless my critic well knows that several kinds of parapet existed before 1833; and that to have described the alterations that were made therein at the two dates, so that such a reader as "Civis" could not cavil at it, would have demanded many sentences, where half-a-dozen words had to do duty for it all. Much the same with regard to the Birds chapel. It is quite true that it was partially restored in 1834 (at which date, not at the later one as I was led to understand, the "bishop's throne," so called, was removed); but so large a share of the work remained to be done before the restoration was completed, that it seemed appropriate to class this in the second list. The same again with regard to the Norman work at the east end: though I agree with "Civis" in thinking that the words I used ("let in," &c.—the best I could hit upon at the time) are infelicitous, as apt to convey to a stranger the impression that the old work was introduced into the more recent. It would have been both better and shorter to have written "are in" instead of "have been let into." This leaves but one definite item in the indictment—the connexion of the exposure of this part of the Norman work, not with the earlier, but with the later restorations. On further inquiry, I find that, as respects that portion of it which is above ground, I was misinformed; and that "Civis" correctly attributes it to the former. The continuation of the work below the floor was, however, not laid bare until the later date. And so much as to having "most hopelessly jumbled up the two restorations."

Surely it can hardly be or become a thing of much moment, in an antiquarian sense, whether certain particular incidents or items in these modern restorations belong to one or the other of two periods only 30 years apart. For all that, it is well to be accurate, even in such minor matters; and, while sorry that the least mistakes should have crept in, I am glad to have it pointed out and corrected. To those who are not familiar with inquiries of this kind, it may seem to be an easy matter to get at all such facts. I found it, however, far otherwise; and can fully unite with Mr. Irvine in thinking it strange that these recent occurrences "should have become so soon and so entirely forgotten," even by some of those who were most concerned in them at the time.

C. W. DIMOND.

the western, grassed on both slopes, and with a
 a foot-path along its crest, runs through arable
 right-angles into Wansdyke at a point a quarter
 mile west of the Cross-keys inn. The whole of the
 id westward of this bank, up to a grassed counter-
 , distant from it 55 paces at the southern end,
 at Wansdyke, and 130 paces at the northern end,
 at the road, has been excavated to a depth varying
 n one to five feet. If it could be shown that this
 ting was coeval with the original bank, and that the
 Aerial was probably used for the neighboring earth-
 rks, my suggestion would be much strengthened.
 ppearances, however, are against this, and support the
 sion that the excavation, together with a shallower
 e near the road, on the east of the bank, was of later
 ate than the fence and foot-path; and that the soil was
 removed by way of the adjoining road. If this be the
 case, the width of the cross-bank would be re-
 duced to about six feet, and its height on both sides
 would be equal. Slight, however, as would then be the
 remains, they would be nearly as good as the poorest
 part of the Odd-down section of Wansdyke at its
 western end. I think this bank, and its connexion with
 Wansdyke, has not been noticed before; and, in the
 absence of any reason to the contrary, I venture to
 suggest (it is often so in such works) that a branch of the
 dyke—possibly of later date than the main line—here
 struck off from it, curving around on the course of the
 aforementioned road, and uniting at D with the piece in
 Prior-park. That this is the most likely theory will
 appear when it is considered that such a rampart would
 keep to the highest part of the ground, leaving ample
 manœuvring space for its defenders in its rear, and
 covering the weak point at the head of the comb. Con-
 tinuing westward, along the Odd-down bank, we come to
 the end near Burnt-house; from which point Major
 Davis avers that Wansdyke "followed the Fosse-way a
 short distance, and then crossed it, taking a more
 westerly direction through Englishcombe." The first
 part of this statement is incorrect. The Fosse-way there
 cut right across the dyke, leaving a short piece between
 it and a quarry at the brink of the Englishcombe valley,
 where it appears to have ended,—perhaps to be resumed
 on the farther side; for in a field half-way to English-
 combe, and some distance down the slope, the 6-inch
 Ordnance-map shows a detached length as still existing.

As to the Roman roads shown in the sketch-plan, there
 is still more scope for adverse comment. Mr. Vison does
 not express himself on whit too strongly when criticizing
 our author's novel notions. It would indeed be startling
 (if his assertion carried any authority with it) to be told
 by a writer, flourishing eighteen centuries after date, who
 is guided only by what he thinks are "ancient roads and
 fences," that "the Roman road known as the Fosse-way
 from Ichester (*Isca*) appears to have avoided *Aquæ
 Sulis* and to have been carried partly along the Wansdyke,
 to the south of the latter city, on the lines shown on the
 map (the broken lines [a very small portion of the whole]
 showing the unascertained way) [as though the two-and-a-
 half miles shown in full line had really been ascertained]
 through Hampton-down Camp, afterwards crossing the
 river and bearing away to the north." And again, "It is
 therefore evident that the original roads used at an early
 date diverted to include *Aquæ Sulis* in their route."
 "Hampton-down Camp is the centre to which they
 originally led, and the deviations were made to include
Aquæ Sulis." Here are positive assertions, coolly
 made, not only without any authority, so far as my
 knowledge serves, but in defiance of every probability.
 It is most unlikely that the Roman engineers, laying out
 such a great trunk-road as the Fosse, having arrived at a
 point on the crest of the ridge in view of *Aquæ*, from
 whence a short and easy course in the same direction
 would pass the traffic at once comfortably into the city,
 should (leaving the natural course to be reverted to subse-
 quently) have struck off at an angle, on a comparatively
 circuitous route through our camp, only to plunge down
 a steep slope and take a crooked line to an unbridged
 river, from whence a still steeper acclivity must be sur-
 mounted before Banner-down is reached. Even if it
 could be proved that a Roman road did once unite the
 points A and L, there is nothing to show that it was a link
 in the Fosse-way. Probably enough, as Mr. Mason points
 out, there were vicinal ways hereabout. While it is
 possible that some of these, as well as portions of the
 Fosse, followed the lines of earlier British roads, it can
 at the best be but matter of conjecture; for, really, no
 one knows anything whatever about it. One thing, how-
 ever, is clear, that remains of a British road, embanked
 on both sides, can distinctly be traced some way through
 the camp, and leaving it on the north side in the direction
 claimed by Major Davis for his original Fosse-way. But
 this embanked track has no resemblance to a Roman
 road; for it winds considerably, is much too narrow, and
 there is no indication that it was ever "metalled," as the
 Fosse-way was. The other "Roman road" shown in the
 sketch-plan connecting *Aquæ* with the camp, apparently
 coincides for the most part with the foot-path leading
 toward Sham castle. It is equally conjectural, albeit a
 third part of it is shown by a full line.

In conclusion let me say that it is much to be regretted
 that several pages of a Handbook professing to be a con-
 cise and authoritative record of what are believed to be
 sober facts; and which might have been devoted to
 really useful expansions of other articles; should have
 been worse than wasted on a discussion which, at its best,
 is almost entirely speculative; and, as to its principal
 statement,—the alleged diversion of the Fosse-way,—
 wholly imaginary.

C. W. DYMOND, F.S.A.

Bath, January 19, 1882.

+ There are indications pointing, I think, clearly
 to the conclusion that the agger of Hampton
 Down Camp is of later date than the divisional
 embankments of the settlement which it has still

It seems much more likely that the dyke crossed the road, and was cut through
 by it. The fact that the road is not cut through the dyke, but that the dyke is cut
 through the road, is a strong indication that the dyke is of earlier date than the
 road. The dyke is a very high and broad wall, and the road is a narrow path
 through it. This is a very unusual arrangement, and it is difficult to see how
 the road could have been cut through the dyke after it was built. It is more
 likely that the dyke was built across the road, and that the road was cut through
 it at a later date.