

present day that was the place for the priest's desk.

THE NEWLY DISCOVERED ROMAN VILLA AT WOLSTON.

The party next walked to the village of Wolston. In a large field a little to the west of the village a Roman villa has been recently discovered. The field is in a portion of Wolston Farm and is on the Craven estate.

The villa covered a considerable extent of ground. The excavations have been carefully made. About three feet under the ordinary level of the field lay the beautiful Roman work, which is now open to view. The walls of the building are clearly defined. The two Mosaic floors are of white, red and black tessaræ, worked into intricate geometrical patterns. A large extent of it is as complete and solid as when it was laid down. In the same spot four skeletons were also found and they were in a state of wonderful preservation. One figure is described as that of a powerful man, about 5ft. 8in. in height. The teeth in all these bodies were perfect. One body, presumably that of a female, was lying in its grave as if in bed. It was lying on its side and the legs were drawn up. At the feet were the bones of a smaller body, probably the infant of the other. From the knives found with two of these female skeletons it is believed that they date from the Anglo-Saxon era.

The representative of the Craven family was present, as was also Mr. Hippisley, of Lambourne.

Mr. James Barrer, who had prepared a plan of the

Mr. JAMES PARKER, who had prepared a plan of the carpet-like pattern of the tessaræ, addressed a few words to those present. He observed that he was perhaps speaking to several who had not seen many Roman villas. If they had seen three or four Roman villas they would find that the chances were that the fifth would differ from the remaining four. Those houses were arranged on different plans, as modern houses were now in the neighbourhood of towns. But yet there were certain things common to the whole of them. It was rather awkward bringing this in at once, with respect to this villa, because up to the present time one of those common things was conspicuous by its absence. That was to say what was called the hypocaust chamber had not been found. In very many of those villas the hypocaust was the chief part remaining and the most interesting. When the Romans came to England they brought their Roman habits with them. One of those customs or habits was to keep themselves warm. They were accustomed to their clear and warm Italian sky. When they came to England they had weather on the whole very different. Therefore one of their first things was to make this warm chamber in their dwellings. Another feature in these villas was that one of the principal chambers generally had a pavement of tessellated work arranged in a pattern, as they saw before them. The large room of the dwelling they had evidently found. What was most interesting in the present discovery was this little recess which came out on the southern side of the great passage. This passage ran from east to west. That passage might be estimated at a hundred feet long at least, and about eight feet wide, and tiled in different places after a different manner. On the south side there seemed to be a little recess,

perhaps about fourteen feet long and five or six feet wide. What would this chamber be used for? It was a small chamber in which most likely the household gods were placed, and was looked upon with a certain amount of respect, and was possibly more or less connected with religious uses. In this particular instance they found a tessellated pavement of even a handsomer pattern than in the large room. With the exception of the pavement at North Lye, perhaps, this was the finest piece of tessellated work that had been found in this district, and for which any authority remained. They might very well ask how came it that there were those Roman villas. Not long since a Roman villa was found at Frilford. Compared with this it was in some respects more interesting, and in others less interesting. At Frilford they had the walls clearly shown, as they were of stone and they were in a field of which the material was earth and sand. Here they had the walls made of masses of chalk, and in a field of a very chalky soil itself. The consequence was it had been thrown down and mixed with the soil, so that it was very difficult to get out a clear line of demarcation of the walls. The question arose, were there any more of these villas there? There was another one near to Wantage. But what were they to infer from the fact that here and there they found these Roman villas at about the distance of seven or eight miles apart? They might compare the Roman occupation of England to something like the present English occupation of India. There must have been stations at about even distances apart from each other, and they were generally by the side of some road. They were thus connected to prevent any sudden rising in the country. Practically the country was thus kept under control, and that control was maintained by officers in a military position, and they lived in these several Roman villas or houses, which were scattered over the country. Then came another very curious question. Why was there not a single Roman house left on the ground? One or two reasons must be assigned. When the Saxons came from the south they seem to have devastated the country wherever they went. Silchester was a great example of that fact. What they could not destroy by pulling down they burnt. In this case they were met with a very difficult problem. They found the bodies of men buried around the villa. One body was at the end of the passage by which they were standing and

three bodies at the other end of the passage, and another body at the north-east corner. This was not a question for archaeologists but rather a question for a jury. The fact that they were buried with certain knives and the position in which they were showed they were not Romans. They probably belonged to some of the tribes which existed in Saxon times. The question was further complicated by this fact. A good many battles had taken place on the adjacent hills and attempts made to gain those hills. Possibly in the times of the Britons they held the hills against the Saxons, and more frequently in the eighth and ninth centuries there were battles between the Danes and the Saxons in order to gain those hills. The great battle of Ashdown fought by King Alfred was the first repulse that the Danes met with. A great deal had been said with regard to this battle. His opinion was that it occurred at the eastern end of the hill and not the western. Connecting it with that battle it was quite possible that other battles took place along that valley in about the seventh and eighth centuries. What was there in the remains before them to suggest burial after battle? Nothing as yet. But two of the bodies had knives buried with them. Supposing this Roman villa to have gone on being occupied it was possible that those who lived in it buried their dead just outside the walls of their own house.

Mr. EVANS, of Oxford, also thought that the skeletons were of Saxons and not of Romans. The position of the knives found with the two bodies entirely agreed with the regular practice of the Teutonic tribes of the fifth and sixth centuries in burying their women. Evidently in the cases before them the people were poor, for in the other instances there was not so much as a knife found. In one of the last graves discovered under the arm of the skeleton was a bone spindle wheel, which was one of the characteristic ornaments buried with Saxon women.

A vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. F. S. Polling, M.A., secretary, to Mr. James Parker and Mr. Evans for their remarks. A similar compliment was also passed to Mr. Dudgeon, under whose care the excavations had been made.

Several coins have been found in the excavations, but they have not yet been deciphered.

Leaving the villa the party passed through the village