

1950

ROMAN PAVEMENT TO BE UNCOVERED

THE magnificent Roman pavement at Woodchester is to be opened to the public once again, for six weeks during the Festival of Britain, in 1951. This decision was taken at a meeting of Woodchester Parochial Church Council on Monday. The pavement will be open from Tuesday, July 10th to August 19th.

The pavement was last unearthed and opened to the public in 1935, originally for two weeks, but so great was the interest that it remained on view for a further week. It was visited by just over 20,000 people.

It is said that for extent and richness of work the Pavement is equalled by few and is unquestionably superior to anything of the kind in Great Britain. Unfortunately, this great work of art has suffered in the past by being pierced in the digging of graves and in other ways. It was opened in part or wholly in the years 1814, 1822, 1834, 1842, 1846, 1852, 1880, 1890, 1926, and then in 1935.

The pavement, which is some 50 feet square, occupied and adorned the western-most hall of the great Roman villa set at Woodchester by its first owners. At present the pavement is buried below some yards of earth to preserve it, and it is thought that some 400 tons of earth will have to be removed. The first complete exploration of both the pavement and the villa was made by Samuel Lysons in 1796-7, and the results published in French and English. The first published notice of the pavement occurs in additions to Camden's "Britannia." (Various drawings made by amateurs survive in the British Museum and elsewhere.)

Besides the pavement in the churchyard there are a number of smaller ones, one in the Priory grounds has in one corner a representation of two Cupids holding up a basket of fruit.

It is hoped that it may be possible to secure a prominent personality to open the pavement.