

ON SOME INEDITED DISCOVERIES OF ROMAN
REMAINS IN LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE.

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WITH the exception of the short account which appeared in the newspaper paragraphs which I shall quote, the discoveries of which I now treat have remained inedited, though they have each a considerable degree of interest as affecting the history of the localities where they occurred.

The first one to which I shall allude is thus recorded in the *Liverpool Mercury* of May 26, 1837:—"A number of Roman coins, some so defaced as to be illegible, others of the reigns of Probus, Victorinus, Gallienus, and Tetricus, were dug up in removing some stone work at Wigan the other day."

The chief point connected with this discovery arises thus:—In the *Archæological Journal*, vol. xxviii, p. 115, in an article on the Tenth Iter of Antoninus, I fixed the site of the Roman station *Coccium* at Wigan, from the fact of its distance from Manchester on the one side, and from Ribchester on the other, along Roman roads agreeing with the distances from *Coccium* to *Mancunium* and *Bremetonacæ* respectively. At that time the only known discoveries at Wigan (so far as the knowledge of antiquaries went) were a number of funeral urns, and a fine gold coin of Vitellius which I noticed in the *Archæological Journal*, vol. xxx, p. 153, and which is now in the Society's possession. This further discovery of coins raises the question, Was not the stonework, in removing which they were found, also of the Roman era? I incline to this opinion. The

account would seem to suggest that the coins were found embedded in the wall. Perhaps there are yet some persons living who remember the discovery; if so, and they see this article, I hope they will make public what knowledge they possess.

The second discovery occurred in a district which has hitherto been considered destitute of Roman remains. With the exception of the coins, fibulæ, &c., found at Meols, no account has been preserved of anything of the Roman period having been found in the peninsula of Wirral, unless the wooden bridge found spanning the Birket be of that period, which is doubtful.

The discovery, which also is recorded in the *Liverpool Mercury*, January 31st, 1834, in a communication from a correspondent, is as follows:—"As some workmen were last week removing the surface of the land on the Arno Hill, in the township of Oxton, Cheshire, for the purpose of obtaining building stone, they were surprised by the appearance of a quantity of small coins among the rubbish, the greater part of which proved to be so completely decayed as to easily rub to powder between the hard fingers and thumbs of the quarrymen; they however picked out what they considered to be a few farthings, and scattered the rest among the loose soil. The coins saved, from having been only from 18 to 20 inches under the surface, are so decayed as to render it difficult to establish * * to what periods some of them relate. The most distinguishable have the heads of Antoninus, Honorius, and Marius Victorinus. * * From their size they may be considered as the semuntio or sextulæ, the smallest coins of the Romans. On the reverse of the Victorinus, is a figure with a weeper in each hand, exactly such as at the present day are borne before the funerals of the rich, and the motto appears to be 'Niobe in litum.' * * The Arno Hill, where the coins were found,

"gives the most perfect idea of a Roman encampment. * *

"The coins are in the possession of Capt. Colquitt, R.N." &c.

The coin of Victorinus, alluded to, is certainly erroneously described. The reverse is evidently one of the FIDES MILITVM type: a female figure holding a standard in each hand. The above letters, half obliterated, might easily be mistaken by one inexperienced in numismatics for NIOBE IN LITVM (!!) a peculiarly astounding reading. The hoard would appear to have been deposited in the ground during the troubled period which marked the close of the dominion of the so-called "Thirty Tyrants," probably in the reign of Aurelian or that of Claudius Gothicus (A.D. 268 to 275), and was doubtless similar in its composition to many others of that epoch constantly found in Britain.

It has hitherto been uncertain where the Roman road leading from Chester to Caerhun (*Conovium*) left the former city, and what was its course after leaving. Perhaps the following discoveries may throw light upon the subject. In the *Chester Courant*, November 13th, 1832, occurs this paragraph:—
 "On Tuesday last, the workmen employed in excavating the
 "new road to the Little Roodee, through the city walls near
 "the Castle, found a Roman lachrymatory, of fine red earthen-
 "ware * * ; it was brought to our office in a very excellent
 "state of preservation. Several Roman coins and vessels
 "were also found," &c.

This plainly appears to have been the discovery of a Roman interment. These interments generally took place along the side of the roads leading from a city or *castrum*; and the one in question may indicate the close proximity of the before-named missing road. This probability seems increased by a discovery which took place in June, 1874, and which is described in the *Chester Courant*, 24th June, 1874, and in the *Archæologia Cambrensis*, vol. v, 4th series, p. 260. It was of a Roman inscribed tombstone, found on the Roodee,

in the course of excavations for a new intercepting sewer. It was standing nearly upright, the top being about three feet below the surface. Considering that it is of the sandstone of the neighbourhood, it is in good preservation. The inscription is—

D. M.

FL. CALLIMOR

PHI. VIX. AN. XXXXII.

ET. SERAPIONI. VIX.

ANN. III. M. VI. THESA

EVS. FRATRI. ET. FILIO.

F. C.

i.e., Diis Manibus. Flavii Callimorphi vixit annos xxxxii. et Serapioni vixit annos iii. menses vi. Thesaeus fratri et filio faciendum curavit. The English translation of this is:—

“To the divine shades of Flavius Callimorphus, he lived forty-two years; and of Serapion, he lived three years and six months. Thesaeus to (his) brother and son, caused this to “be made.” A human skull and a number of bones were found beneath the stone, and a number of fragments of Samian ware not far off. This tombstone, which is now in the possession of the Chester Archæological Society, I may add from personal inspection, is 4 feet high by 28 inches broad and 7 inches thick. Above the inscription there is sculptured “a representation of the recumbent figure of an adult and “child, and beneath that a table supporting a lamp and three “urns.” It will thus be seen that the stone is very similar to that found in 1859, in excavating for the foundations of the Chester New Corn Exchange,* with the exception that the former has a pediment above the sculpture.

I have now to add a few words with regard to a very interesting pig of lead, weighing 168 lbs., discovered in Commonhall-street, Chester, in 1849, and now preserved in the

* Now preserved at the Water Tower Museum.

Chester Archæological Society's Museum, bearing an imperfect inscription which has generally been read as

CAESARI VADON

but without any attempt at expansion or translation. On some pigs of lead found in Derbyshire the following inscriptions occur, which may possibly give the key for the correct reading and expansion of that found at Chester:—

- (1.) IMP. CAES. HARDRIANI. AVG. MET. LVT.
- (2.) C. IVL. PROTI. BRIT. LVT. EX. ARG.
- (3.) L. ARVCONI. VERECVNDI. METAL. LVTVD.

The conclusion arrived at by archæologists, with regard to these, is that LVT. and LVTVD. are abbreviations of the word LVTVDAE, the name of a Roman station given by the anonymous Chorographer of Ravenna, as existing in Derbyshire. Let us see whether the termination of the inscription found at Chester similarly contains the name of a town. From personal inspection of the pig, I have found that it is by no means certain that the last letters are VADON. That the three last are DON seems correct, the N being reversed thus, N, the two preceding may be NA or AN, in the latter case the N being probably reversed. They are again preceded by an S, the whole thus reading SNADON or SANDON. Now in the Chorography of Ravennas we find placed between Chester (*Deva*,) and Caerhun (*Conovium*,) and immediately preceding the former, a town bearing the name of SANDONIVM, and in one manuscript copy of the work (that preserved in the library of the Vatican,) it is called SAVDONIVM. The resemblance between the abbreviation of the name of this town, and the termination of the Chester inscription is very close, and I strongly hold the opinion that the latter contains the abbreviation of the name of the town. I may add that Professor Hübner of Berlin, the author of *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, also expresses the opinion that a town is named in the inscription, but he apparently

has failed to recognise the name of *Sandonium*. But where was this town? It must have been where lead was produced, and the only sites, in the neighbourhood mentioned by the Chorographer of Ravenna, that will answer, are at *Croes Atti*, near Flint, where immense heaps of scoriæ remain mixed with Roman coins, fibulæ, styli, &c., and where foundations of buildings have been turned up by the plough; or at Caergwrle, where are also extensive evidences of a Roman settlement, whose occupants were engaged in smelting, but in all probability the first mentioned place is the correct site.

Another Roman inscription found at Chester in 1653, has at last, after a long absence, returned to the city of its origin. It is a fine altar, erected for the welfare of some of the conjoint emperors, probably Severus and Caracalla, though Horsley erroneously attributes it to Maximianus and Diocletian (Horsley, *Brit. Rom. Cheshire*, No. 3.) He says it was then in the possession of the Rev. Mr. Prescott. With the descendants of that gentleman it has remained until the present year (1875,) though in various works it has been reported as missing or lost. In May, 1874, the Rev. C. K. Prescott, who had been Vicar of Stockport since 1820, informed me that it was in his possession. In writing to Mr. Franks, of the British Museum, I informed him of this circumstance, and he at once endeavoured to obtain it for the National Collection. My friend, Mr. J. P. Earwaker, F.S.A., also, I believe, endeavoured to obtain it, but unsuccessfully; for the altar is now in the possession of the Chester Archæological Society, at their Museum. By what means it came there, whether by purchase at Mr. Prescott's death (which occurred this year,) or by presentation, I know not, but as the Dean of Chester is about to read a paper on the subject to the Chester Archæological Society, I presume he will make known the reasons for its return to that city.

There is but one other fact to which I would call attention,

and that is the existence of a dock or basin, presumably of the Roman period, in the north of Lancashire. It seems to have been first noticed by Baines in his History of Lancashire, (edit. 1836,) Vol. IV., p. 570, where, under the head of "Warton," he says, "A small bay, between Lindeth and Warton, receiving a rivulet from the eminences east of Silverdale is called Quicksand Pool, where in 1832 the remains of a dock were discovered, which had been formed of large quantities of timber and stone that covered about an acre in space. The roots of trees are perceptible on the sands at low water, between the mouths of the Keer and Quicksand Pool." And at p. 584 he says, "Carnforth is the south-western township of the parish of Warton, and is chiefly remarkable as the scene of a great aquatic depredation, several hundred acres of the salt marsh adjoining the south bank of the Keer having been washed away within the last century. One of the effects of the removal of the alluvial soil has been to exhibit a kind of subterraneous shipyard, in which large quantities of timber, some unwrought and others partly formed into vessels, have been discovered."

This dock still exists. From the present appearance of the surrounding ground much information may be gained as to the original space covered by the sea at the time the dock was formed, though it is now grass land.

The dock is somewhat in the shape of an ordinary pie-dish, or oval with flattened ends. Its long diameter is about 200 yards, its short one about 100. The longest diameter is nearly due E. and W. At the S.E. corner there is a channel leading from it southwards to the river Keer, out of which channel again, on its eastern side, is another leading into what appears to have been an extensive roadstead for vessels waiting to come into the dock, but which is now a large field. The present average depth of the dock is from 30 to 40 feet.

Its bottom is covered with grass, interspersed with thorn and reeds. The channel leading from the dock was evidently of the same depth, though in portions of it the earth has since accumulated. About the middle of the north side of the dock there is some modern stonework surmounting a farm-yard drain. It is on the right-hand side of the road from Lancaster to Burton, and in the parish of Warton. The farm on which it is situated is called "Dock Acre Farm." A correspondent of the *Guardian* (London,) says of it, in November, 1873, that "the steps down to it were extant a few years ago, "and an anchor was found in it." It is now nearly two miles from the sea, but it is evident that at a remote period the sea has come up to it. The river Keer is also now a mere streamlet. The dock is only about three quarters of a mile from Borwick Hall, the ancient seat of the Bindloss's, and where Charles II, for a short time, found shelter, in August, 1650. It is to be hoped that some measures will be taken for its preservation. The Roman road from Lancaster to Natland must have passed within a short distance of it.
