ON THE IDENTITY OF THE "MEDIO-LANUM" OF THE SECOND AND TENTH ITER OF ANTONINUS.

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INTRODUCTION.

Of late years very substantial work has been done in relation to the direction and assignment of stations along the recognized Roman roads in Lancashire and Cheshire. Among the many workers, the late Mr. Thompson Watkin stands out prominently as one of the latest and most successful. Bringing to its study an inborn love of the work, he speedily succeeded in unraveling the intricacies of the ways in his native county of Lancaster, shewing the Roman stations of Coccium and Brementonaceum to have been respectively at Wigan and Ribchester. Next, he grappled vigorously with the Cheshire roads. One remembers with interest his controversies with the older archaeologists as to the site of Condate being at Kinderton. The point is now universally conceded. An equally valuable result was his identification of the site of
Mediolanum, the Roman town of Mediolanum with Chesterton, near Newcastle in Staffordshire. To the solving of this question Mr. Watkin gave much time and thought, as his many essays on the subject witness. There can scarcely be a doubt here, also, as to the correctness of his judgment, based as it is on the discovery of the castra, and its agreement with the mileage of the Itinerary. My reason for calling attention to this subject is that subsequent to the publication of Mr. Watkin's *Roman Cheshire*, a writer in the *Montgomery Collections* (vol. xxi, p. 35), under the title of "Powys in the time of the Romans", gives a condensed summary of the historical and Itinerary portions of the book, which relate to the country which comprises, or is in the immediate neighbourhood of, the ancient province of Powys. The writer does justice to the industry and judicial spirit in which Mr. Watkin carried on his investigations, but altogether differs from Mr. Watkin's views as to the line of the Roman roads in some particulars, and seeks to reopen the controversy as to Mediolanum, and would substitute a place in North Wales for its site. More than ordinary attention is due to the paper in the *Montgomery Collections*, since the writer tells us that it is a collective, rather than individual opinion: that on the question of the Roman roads "it is "the view which Montgomeryshire antiquaries are "disposed to take"" (vol. xxi, p. 62).

**LOCAL DETAILS OF THE SECOND AND TENTH ITERs.**

The Itinerary of Antonine is a road-book of the chief military ways of the Roman Empire. The portion relating to Britain contains the names of the stations (with the approximate distance between them) along these roads, or Iters, which intersected the province from north to south, and from east to
west. In many instances so substantial was the construction of the road, and so well chosen the direction, that our highways, or modern roads, follow on these old lines of the Roman road, while the stations have often given rise to important cities, such as Chester, York, Carlisle and Newcastle; or great commercial centres, as London and Manchester. It is also interesting to note how, in these times, the physical features of the country had much to do with the direction of the several Iter's, and their accompanying stations. As to the skilful manner in which the sites of the latter were selected, we have a good illustration in the case of Chester. With virtually a sea front, it was also protected on the west for 14 miles by its own ample stream, the Dee, and on the east, the Mersey secured it from attack for 40 miles along its course. Besides, as it commanded the only ford over the river therabouts, it was the key to the possession of North Wales. It is quite possible, indeed, highly probable, that when, in A.D. 58, Suetonius Paulinus led his expedition into Mona (Anglesey) his base of operations was Chester. Further, the rivers we have mentioned largely determined the course of the Roman roads through the counties of Lancaster and Chester. Take the course of the Tenth Iter, which, when south of Chester, making for Wigan, instead of taking a direct north course, owing to the formidable river in front—the Mersey—strikes east for Manchester, or rather Stretford (Streetford). Owing to this fact, Manchester from this period became a position ever increasing in importance, since all the traffic from the west of England intended for the northern provinces must necessarily pass through it. In the same way then, as now, the traffic of North Wales must largely pass through Chester. We get a further illustration of this in the case of the Second Iter.
Mediolanum.

After leaving Chester by Beeston, for Chesterton, its course is due south, but instead of being continued on to Lichfield, or Wall, it strikes west to Wroxeter (Viroconium), 20 miles distant. The reason is obvious: the river Trent, to this day, is liable to overflow its banks and inundate the surrounding lands; in former times its devastations we may believe to have been more serious than at present, and sufficient to account for the detour of 20 miles to Wroxeter.

There was beside this physical cause a substantial reason for the inclusion of Viroconium on the line of this military road. There is evidence that previous to the arrival of the Romans there was on the spot a British trading post of some importance. The presence of a Roman wall five miles in circumference, and irregular in form, can best be accounted for on the supposition of the previous existence of a considerable settlement, which the wall was intended to protect. From its position, it was admirably placed for receiving the native products of mid-Wales, and the rich mineral stores of the districts around. This kind of trade it would be the policy of Rome to foster and develop, in view of the economic materials requisite for the construction of the numerous castra to which they were committed. A town having within easy reach good supplies of lead, iron, copper, coal, and the best of pottery clay, would be likely to be placed on the main line of communication. No place on their march from the south had presented like advantages to the Romans. Nor need we wonder at its after progress. Under Roman rule it became a town busily engaged in trade and manufactures, with its shops and market place, the evidence of which was brought to light in the excavations of 1860. As shewing that this industrial development was not limited to the prime
necessaries of that early civilization, it is curious to find that the fine arts here found a home, for an enameller's shop was discovered, with its furnaces, and appliances, and finished wares. So again with the painter's palette, and the stamps for various nostrums for diseases of the eye. Enough surely has been said to justify the detour in the road which placed Viroconium on the main line of communication between the north and south of Britain.

Another fact brought out by a local study of these Iteris is, that the prevailing idea that a Roman road was invariably straight is only partly correct. We see this in the case of the second Iter. It is aiming for the south; yet, from Carlisle in the north-west, it makes for York in the east, and from thence west to Chester. Military reasons—that of connecting two legionary stations—were paramount.

ARE THERE TWO PLACES CALLED MEDIOLANUM IN THIS LOCALITY?

The answer to this question involves a controversy as old as the century. It is useless to recur to the various phases which it has assumed, or to the varied conjectures as to the site of the second station, if such existed. Of more importance is the fact that at no time has the question been in a better position for definite settlement than at present.

The question before us the Montgomery antiquaries answer thus: "We certainly can but come to the conclusion that the balance is in favour of there being two distinct stations called Mediolanum rather than only one" (Montgomery Collections, vol. xxi, p. 61). Mr. Watkin's opinion was "that it was most improbable that there were different stations of the same name close at hand."
This fact will bear emphasizing. Mr. Watkin's sectional method, if I may so term it, of dealing with the Roman remains by counties, has its disadvantages, as well as advantages. Thus our question, if answered in the affirmative, becomes a Welsh one, and was reserved for treatment in his *Cambria Romana*, which he was not permitted even to commence. Our question, therefore, did not receive that thorough and exhaustive treatment which we might have expected at his hands. That he would have done it, had he lived, we may be assured.

I have no hesitation in at once stating that, in my opinion, in this district there is only one Mediolanum, that only one is required by the Itineraries when rightly read, that all the difficulties and misconceptions as to the route arise from the overlooking of material evidence. With the discovery of Bovium at Beeston, the last of our local difficulties was solved, and the Iter passing through Cheshire from Lancashire was made complete as to its stations, and other details of distance. After these remarks, I shall proceed to give the evidence in proof of what I have advanced, for it is in every way desirable that questions of this nature should not be left in doubt.

We commence with the Tenth Iter. Its course is Mancunium (Manchester) to Condate (Kinderton) and Mediolanum (Chesterton), where it ended. The course of the Second Iter was Mancunium (Manchester) to Condate (Kinderton) to Deva (Chester) to Bovium (Beeston) and Mediolanum (Chesterton), and through Viroconium to London and the Kentish coast. To us in Chester all is clear and straightforward. At the same time there is some explanation necessary to those not acquainted with the local bearing of the several stations. It is this:
that while both Iteras pass through Manchester for Chesterton, one—that is, the Second Iter—calls at two additional stations on its course; these are Deva (Chester) and Bovium (Beeston), and on that account it is inferred that the Mediolanum of this Iter was in North Wales, some 35 miles distant from Chester. The circumstance of the additional stations is due to the exceptional geographical position of Chester, which I will explain. The traffic in Roman times from Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire along the Tenth Iter, destined for stations south of Mediolanum (Chester-ton), passed through Manchester and Kinderton, direct to Chesterton. It was the through or shorter route from point to point. On the other hand, the Second Iter came from the legionary station at York, through Manchester, to the legionary station at Chester, and then made its way to Mediolanum and the south by Beeston, where it would join the Tenth Iter, which it had left at Condace. The position may be illustrated by our modern railway system. Take the case of Birmingham and the London and North-Western railway. Trains proceeding northward on the main line do not touch Birmingham direct; this is reached, if so desired, by a branch or loop line from Rugby, which afterwards rejoins the main line at Stafford. So it was with the Roman Itinerary route running from north to south. Deva was not on the main line, for through traffic. That passed through Kinderton on to Chesterton, while to reach Deva you branched off from Kinderton to Deva, and from thence, by way of Beeston, rejoined the main line at Chesterton. Thus we see that the Tenth Iter through Cheshire was the route for the through traffic, while the Second Iter branched off from it to include Chester in the way we have described. This line from Chester to
Chesterton is a well-known route, and fully described in the pages of *Roman Cheshire* (p. 61). From being essentially a Chester road, it is known as the Via Devana. The various Iters have undergone much doubtful manipulation in the way of correction and alterations at the hands of antiquaries. It is pleasant to find that the section relating to Cheshire and Lancashire, when rightly understood, is found to be strictly accurate and reliable.

**VIEW OF THE WRITER IN THE "MONTGOMERY COLLECTIONS" AS TO ONE OR MORE PLACES NAMED MEDIOLANUM.**

The writer already referred to contends that it is highly probable that the Mediolanum of the Second Iter is not the same station as the Mediolanum of the Tenth Iter. He says, "Mr. Thompson Watkin thinks it most improbable that it is a different station; but is it so improbable? On the contrary, we are inclined to think the balance of probabilities lies the other way. (1) There are in the Iters two stations of the same name, viz., Bovium of the Second Iter, and Bovium, or Bomium, of the Twelfth Iter. Why should there not also be two stations of the name of Mediolanum? the one on the Second, and the other on the Tenth. (2) According to Mr. Watkin's theory, the Second Iter and the Tenth Iter must be identical from Mancunium to the station of Mediolanum. We venture to think this improbable for several reasons:—The Tenth Iter is from Mancunium to Condate, and from thence to Mediolanum (of that Iter). The Second Iter is from Mancunium to Condate, and from thence to Deva, and from Deva to Bovium, and from thence to Rutunium and Mediolanum (of that
"Iter), and from thence to Uriconium. The only "identity of route between the two Iters, *primà "facie*, is from Mancunium to Condate; from the "latter station they take separate and different "courses, the Second Iter going to Deva, and the "Tenth to Condate and Mediolanum (of that Iter)."

It is sufficient to remark, in regard to the first point, that the accepted reading of the station on the Twelfth Iter is Bovium, and not Bomium. In regard to the second point, it may be observed that the route of the Second Iter, as laid down by the writer, is scarcely correct. It is given as follows:—Mancunium, Condate, Deva, Bovium, Rutunium, and Uriconium. It should have been—Mancunium, Condate, Deva, Bovium, Mediolanum: a material difference. I have previously explained that the inclusion of Deva and Bovium in the Second Iter was effected by means of a loop line from Condate to Deva, Bovium, and Mediolanum, the material point being that the destination of both Iters was the same, viz., Mediolanum; the one by the direct, and the other by the circuitous route, so as to include the legionary station of Deva.

Further, the writer remarks:—"According to "Mr. Watkin's theory, the Second Iter, when leav-"ing Deva for Mediolanum and Uriconium, will "have to retrace its course to Condate, from which "it had already come from Mancunium. Is that "probable? We think not. Can any other in-"stance be given of the route of an Iter being the "retracing of the course along which it had already "come? If the route of the Second Iter, after "leaving Deva, had been through Condate, is it "not probable that the latter station would be "given? A route professing to start at Man-"cunium, and to run from Condate to Deva, and "to pass from thence, without mentioning Condate,
"to Bovium and Mediolanum, surely must be a different course from one professing to start at "Mancunium, and to run without mentioning "Bovium to Condate and Mediolanum." (Montgomery Collections, vol. xxi, p. 61.) There is a fallacy underlying the whole of this lengthened argument. The writer had forgotten, or was unaware of, the route to Mediolanum (Chesterton) from Deva, by Bovium (or Beeston), known as the Via Devana. Hence the point, that when leaving Deva for Mediolanum the course would be retraced to Condate, from which it had already come, is not established. There would be no doubling back along the course. The course would be as indicated on the Iter, as follows:

Deva . . . (Chester).
Bovium . . (Beeston).
Mediolanum . (Chesterton).

A glance at the map will make this even more apparent, shewing the point at which the Iter left Condate for Deva, and its course until it reunited at Mediolanum with the main road. It will be further seen that the only portion of the route traversed in common by the two Iters is that between Mancunium and Condate. Another writer, the Rev. Dr. Hoopell, thus alludes to the same difficulty:—"This portion of the Second Iter has been perhaps as great a puzzle as any part of the "Tenth Iter. The Tenth Iter says Mediolanum "is 18 miles from Condate. The Second Iter gives "Condate, and Mediolanum too, but interposes "Deva and Bovium between them. Thus it makes "the distance 50 miles, divided thus:—Condate "to Deva 20 miles, Deva to Bovium 10 miles, "Bovium to Mediolanum 20 miles. It is plain, "therefore, that while there was a direct road from "Condate to Mediolanum of 18 miles in length,
Between Mediolanum and Deva.

"there was also a circuitous route, by Chester and " Bovium, of 50 miles in length. I think it most " probable that Bovium was at Caergwrle and " Mediolanum at Malpas." The puzzle in this case is readily solved by accepting Beeston for Bovium on the Via Devana. The interposition of Deva and Bovium between Condatus and Mediolanum is strictly correct; it was the Deva branch from the main line, as before explained.

ON THE ROMAN ROAD, AND STATION BETWEEN MEDIO- LANUM (CHESTERTON) AND DEVA (CHESTER).

As I have not personally explored this ground, I fall back on the labours of others. First, as to the road from Chesterton to Chester; this was personally surveyed by the Bishop of Cloyne, at the beginning of the century. (Magna Britannia, vol. ii. pl. 2, p. 434). He says, that "the road at " the second bottom, to the north of Chesterton, " bears for Nantwich, under the name of the Wat- ling Street. The turnpike road, since the time " of Dr. Mason, has nearly obliterated it, except " about Bunbury, where the modern road declines " to the right, while the Roman way keeps straight " under the north-east side of Beeston Hill, on " which, being so commanding a situation, there " was probably a post for the protection of travel- " lers, and from whence the line of the old road is " plainly to be distinguished, for about two miles " and a-half, when the turnpike road again joins it, " and proceeds with it."

Ormerod confirms this, and adds that the Roman road had been recently traced under the rock of Beeston, converging on the city of Chester. (History of Cheshire, vol. i. p. 24.) More material still are the remaining relics of this road. Two miles
east of Beeston there yet remains a mile of the road, which is locally known as Watfield's Pavement. Fifty years ago the Ordnance Surveyors found the evidence of the existence of this road for two miles, just outside the city boundary, and pointing in the direction of Beeston. The road is marked STREET WAY on the map.

Mr. Watkin observes—"We have at Chesterton (Mediolanum) a walled castra, such as would form the terminus of an Iter, with at least five Roman roads leading from it, one of them being the important Via Devana connecting it with Deva (Chester). The distance, according to the second Iter, of Deva from Mediolanum is thirty miles; its distance from Chesterton by the road just named is exactly the same. Moreover, the Iter gives us at ten miles from Chester an intermediate station, Bovium. Accordingly, at just ten miles from Chester is the grand insulated rock of Beeston, rising precipitously from the plain of Cheshire to the height of 366 feet, crowned with rock-cut trenches, and the imposing ruins of the all but impregnable castle built in 1220, by Ralph Blundeville, sixth Earl of Chester. The engineering skill of the Romans, which recognized the importance of the site of Lincoln (similarly situated), would not neglect this formidable position, especially when the Via Devana ran beneath it. No record exists of any Roman remains having been found within the ruins, but anything above ground would be destroyed by the builders of the castle, and the soil has probably never been disturbed since that period. That any considerable station was placed here I do not assert: its proximity to Chester would not require one; and the limited space on the summit of the rock would render one impossible. A small mansio or mutatio..."
“would in all probability be erected. My own
"opinion," adds Mr. Watkin, "is that Beeston
"represents the site of Bovium." Roman coins and
other objects have been found in the neighbourhood,
although not on the site of the present castle. Of
the existence of the Roman road between Medio-
lanum and Deva there can, after the evidence ad-
duced, be no doubt. It is very probable that Beeston
represents the site of Bovium. Mr. Watkin speaks
without any doubt on the point. My own observa-
tion leads me to the conclusion that the presence
on the site of a presumed Roman station of a
Norman or Edwardian castle is quite sufficient in
itself to account for the disappearance of the more
material evidence.

THE SITES SUGGESTED FOR BOVIUM AND MEDIOLANUM
OF THE TENTH ITER.

After the very decided opinion of the writer which
we have quoted as to the existence of two distinct
stations called Mediolanum, it was to be expected
that the ground for this opinion would be stated.
We are told that the sites of Bovium and Medio-
lanum of the Tenth Iter will be found respectively
at Bangor Issacoed and Clawdd Coch, both places
situate in North Wales—one at the distance of 16
miles from Chester, the other nearly 40 miles. We
may recall the fact already mentioned—that if the
stations hereabouts on the Tenth Iter are rightly
understood, there is no necessity for casting about
for other localities. As further confirming this view,
there will be no difficulty in shewing that the evi-
dence in favour of the site of Bangor Issacoed for
Bovium is altogether insufficient. Evidence, strictly
so called, there is none, either of the existence of a
station, or of the road leading to it. The reported
discovery there of Roman coins turns out to have been a mistake. No Roman remains have been found on or near the site (Pennant's *Tour in Wales*, vol. i, p. 287). Horsley, two hundred years ago, when the chances of tracing the road were more favourable than at present, thus reports of his visit: "No visible remains of the Roman way are pretended, nor could I discern any, when I rode from "Chester to Bangor to inquire into this matter" (*Britannia Romana*, p. 416).

We turn now to the evidence advanced by the writer in favour of his opinion. It is well known that the Bishop of Cloyne and his Chancellor, at the close of the last century, traversed the course of the leading Iter in England. The following passage, referring to Mediolanum, is quoted by the writer from their work:—"The Mediolanum of the "Second Iter is a place totally distinct from the "Mediolanum of the Tenth Iter. This lying on the "road through Bangor, and the other on that "through Kinderton; and as the last may well be "fixed at Chesterton, near Newcastle-under-Lyme, "so this I have no doubt is the camp called Clawdd "Coch, at the confluence of the Tanadd and the "Vyrnwy" (*Montgomery Collections*, vol. xxi, p. 61).

In this instance the Bishop's conjectures have proved to be in fault, and under circumstances which need explanation. There is on the south a well-known Roman way leading out of Chester by Eccleston, Eaton, and Aldford, (Oldford), and pointing for Bangor Issacoed. The Bishop traced the road part of the way, and concluded that it was continued on to Bangor Issacoed. Instead of this being the case, we know that at a point, some five or six miles from Chester and ten miles from Bangor, the road divided right and left, and
Conclusions.

neither of the branch roads approach within six miles of the place. A similar account of the same road is given by the Bishop in Lyson's *Magna Britannia*, and there the word "Banchor" is used for Bangor, upon which Mr. Watkin remarks: "It is evident, by his using the word "Banchor" for "Bangor, that the Bishop had fallen to some extent under the influence of the forged Itinerary of "Richard, which had, subsequently to Horsley's "time, been concocted by Bertram, and published "by Dr. Stukeley, in which Bangor is latinised into "Banchorium, and made to be the same place as "the Bovium of Antoninus" (Watkin's *Roman Cheshire*, p. 51). Mr. Watkin's remarks recall the fact that, in the last century, an Itinerary purporting to be the work of Richard of Cirencester was given to the antiquarian world. This supposed work of a monk of Westminster is now rightly regarded as spurious. It is right that it should be known that the suggestion of Bangor Issacoed as the site of Bovium is based on a forged document.

In finally disposing of the claims of Bangor Issacoed to Itinerary position, it is only necessary to remark that a very material circumstance has been overlooked—namely, the physical condition of the locality. It is evident that the river Dee in that neighbourhood occupied at one time a very much larger area than at present, and owing to its windings becoming confluent, it presented more the appearance of a broad lake than a river. It was a physical impossibility for Bangor Issacoed to have been a Roman station, seeing that the supposed site, during the period in question, was more or less under water.

I do not pursue the enquiry as to the claims of Clawdd Coch to represent Mediolanum; the suggested sites are on one line, and stand or fall
Mediolanum.

together. If the position of Bangor Issacoed is no longer tenable after what I have said, Clawdd Coch must be rejected also as to any claim to be considered an Itinerary station.

We may, I think, rightly conclude that the identity of the places called Mediolanum in the Second and Tenth Iter is well established, the reference in both instances being to the station at Chesterton; and that the writer in the *Montgomery Collections* has shewn no good reason for disturbing the identification of Bovium with Beeston, and Mediolanum with Chesterton.