

THE ROMANO-BRITISH NAMES OF RAVENGLASS AND
BORRANS (MUNCASTER AND AMBLESIDE).

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No section of the Antonine Itinerary is so obscure or so disputed as that which English antiquaries call Iter X, that which runs from Clanoventa to Mediolanum.¹ Innumerable suggestions have been offered as to its course, but no one has yet hit on a theory which has commanded the approval of any one else. I do not myself pretend to have found the key to the riddle. But, so far as the northern half, that is, the first four stages, of the Iter are concerned, it seems possible to restate the few facts in a way which may at least help future inquirers.

Translated into English, the Itinerary runs as follows :

Clanoventa to Galava	..	..	18	Roman miles.
Galava to Alone	..	..	12	” ”
Alone to Calacum	..	..	19	” ”
Calacum to Bremetonacum	..	..	27	” ”
Bremetonacum to Coccium	..	..	20	” ”
Coccium to Mancunium	..	..	17	” ”
Mancunium to Condate	..	..	18	” ”
Condate to Mediolanum	..	..	19	” ”

Where this route began and where it ended is quite obscure ; fortunately, the fifth, sixth and seventh names give a clue to its middle portion and its general course. Bremetonacum, more usually spelt Bremetennacum, was the name of the Roman fort on the Ribble, eight miles east of Preston in Lancashire ; Coccium was that of the Roman site at Wigan, and Mancunium (though the proper spelling may be doubtful) was that of the Roman fort at

¹ pp. 481, 482. Wess.



FIG. I. ROMAN ROADS IN NORTH-WEST BRITAIN.

This map is a sketch-plan, intended to show the general positions of the places and roads discussed in the paper which it illustrates. I believe it to be fairly correct in detail, but I will not assert that it puts every place in its mathematically true position or that it reproduces the distances between these places with mathematical exactitude. Absolute accuracy in minutiae is, indeed, unattainable on such small plans without an expense of time and money which the plans would seldom justify. Even the last and largest map of Roman Britain drawn by Kiepert (Berlin, 1893), on the scale of 1 : 2500000, puts some places several miles out of their true positions and distorts the distances between them seriously.

Manchester. We have therefore to deal with a route which began somewhere north of Ribchester and ran south through Lancashire. Now the Roman roads which run out north or north-east from Ribchester are fairly well known (fig. 1). The two principal ones run nearly parallel and may have served almost as alternatives. One of these crossed the moors round the forest of Bowland and approached the fort of Overborough in the Lune valley, close to Kirkby Lonsdale. The other seems to have followed an easier, lowland, route to Lancaster and thence to Overborough, and perhaps also direct to Kendal: the roads are unfortunately obscure at this point. From Overborough there was access by well-known roads due north to the valleys of the Eden and South Tyne and the Roman forts in them, and thus to the middle and western portions of Hadrian's Wall. There was also access, past the fort at Watercrock (near Kendal), to the fort at Borran's Ring (near Ambleside), and thence over the Wrynose to the forts at Hardknot and at Muncaster, or, as it is more often called, Ravenglass, on the west Cumberland coast.¹ From Ambleside there was also a mountain trail over High Street to the Eden valley and the fort at Brougham Castle near Penrith. Besides these communications northwards, a road ran from Ribchester, north-east and east, by the fort at Elslack, towards the fort at Ilkley and the Leeds region. Finally, it is possible that a mountain trail connected Overborough with the fort which lies 22 miles north-east of it in Wensleydale at Brough by Bainbridge, but (save for three or four miles immediately south-west of Brough) very little is known of this road or, indeed, of any road to this fort.

In selecting from among these roads one which might fit our *Iter*, we may exclude these which run eastwards. They lead into districts where the names of the chief Roman sites are fairly well known, so that the *Iter*, if it passed that way, would surely have ended at one of these ascertained places, and not at the unknown *Clanoventa*. Thus, if it were argued that the route of the *Iter* ran by Elslack,

¹ The line of this road is not very clear throughout. Between the Wrynose and Hardknot passes it seems to have run along the left (south) bank of the infant Duddon. The disused roadway on the other bank, which the Ordnance Survey

calls Roman, seemed to Mr. R. G. Collingwood, Mr. G. Wordsworth and myself, when we once examined it, to be connected with a disused farm-steading and to be modern.

Ilkley and Adel (of which the Roman names happen to be unknown),¹ one would still expect it to end at either Isurium (Aldborough) or Calcaria (Newton Kyme) or Castleford (Legiolum). Moreover, the distances in the Itinerary do not agree with those of these sites; Elslack, for example, is not 27, but about 21, Roman miles from Ribchester, while Ilkley is about 13, not 19, Roman miles from Elslack. Similarly, any route which may have run from Ribchester by Bainbridge to the east-coast road-system would almost certainly have ended at some point on that system, of which point the name was otherwise recorded. We may conclude that, in all probability, the route of the Itinerary is to be sought north or north-west of Ribchester and along the lines of the first two roads mentioned above.

Here it may be well to add another piece of evidence, from the document known as the *Notitia Dignitatum*. This contains, among other things, a list of forts and garrisons on Hadrian's Wall, which stops short at Birdoswald (Amboglanna); it then continues:

praefectus alae Petrianae, Petrianis
 praefectus numeri Maurorum Aureliorum, Aballaba
 tribunus cohortis ii Lingonum, Congavata
 tribunus cohortis i Hispanorum, Axeloduno
 tribunus cohortis ii Thracum, Gabrosenti
 tribunus cohortis i Aeliae classicae, Tunnocelo
 tribunus cohortis i Morinorum, Glannibanta
 tribunus cohortis iii Nerviorum, Alione
 cuneus Sarmatarum, Bremetenraco
 praefectus alae Herculeae, Olenaco
 tribunus cohortis vi Nerviorum, Virosido.²

Here plainly the sequence Glannibanta, Alione, Bremetenraco, corresponds to the Itinerary's Clanoventa, Alone, Bremetonacum. Now this list of forts from the *Notitia* seems to belong to the west-coast counties, Lancashire, Westmorland, Cumberland. For Aballaba is known to have been where Papcastle now stands near Cockermouth, while Axeloduno is the place-name, better spelt Uxello-

¹ Ilkley is often called Olicana, but Mr. W. H. Stevenson has shown that to be phonetically impossible (*English Historical Review*, 1912, p. 17, note 115). Actually

the Romano-British name of Ilkley is unknown.

² *N.D. Occ.* xl, 45-56.

dunum, which denoted the fort on the hill above Maryport,¹ and Bremetenracum is Ribchester. Moreover, as Chancellor Ferguson long ago pointed out, the garrisons assigned in the *Notitia* to Congavata and Gabrosentum recur on inscriptions at Moresby on the Cumberland coast, eleven miles south of Maryport, and it is therefore probable that one or other of these names was the ancient name of Moresby.

A further trace of this sequence of names occurs in the corrupt but valuable lists of the Ravenna Geographer (pp. 430, 431). There we find the following names :

Cantiventi (corrupt for Glannibanta or Clanoventa)
Iulioecenon (corrupt for Tunnocelum)
Gabricentio (corrupt for Gabrosentum)
Alauna (variant of Alione)

followed very shortly by Bresnetaci, that is, Ribchester. Here again is a list of names connected with the western region.

It remains to consider what western forts can be connected with Iter X. From Ribchester to Overborough is about 28 English miles,² so that, if Calacum be put at Overborough, the Itinerary distance of 27 Roman miles is a little (say, two miles) too short. On the other hand, it is possible that Calacum may be Lancaster. The route from Ribchester to that town is unfortunately not known with precision at all points, though there is no real doubt that such a road existed ; but it appears to have probably taken a line of about 25 English or 27 Roman miles, skirting the hills. From Overborough to Low Borrow Bridge, the next fort due north of it, along a quite certain road, is about 16 English miles, and this agrees moderately well with the Itinerary, which allots to its second stage 19 miles. On the other hand, from Lancaster to Watercrock is, as the crow flies, 18 miles ; the road is very unlikely to have run quite straight, and may even have made a detour by

¹ That is proved by the numerous inscriptions of the Cohors i Hispanorum found at Maryport and by the fact that Uxellodunum is several times put next to Aballaba in our ancient authorities, while Aballaba is known to be Papcastle, and

Papcastle is about 5 miles from Maryport and connected with it by an easily traceable Roman road.

² The last account of the road is that by Mr. W. Harrison in *Trans. Lancs. and Chesbire Antiq. Society*, xxxi (1914), 69-87.

Overborough, but here our ignorance of the actual road-lines prevents any positive assertion. It is obvious, however, that either a stage from Overborough to Low Borrow Bridge or one from Lancaster to Watercrock would fit moderately with the Itinerary. When we pass to the third stage, to which the Itinerary assigns 12 miles, there appears to be no fort which can be traced at the right distance north of Low Borrow Bridge. Either the Itinerary numerals must be thrown over or this line of country must be given up. On the other hand, there seems little doubt that a road connected Watercrock with the Borrans fort near Ambleside, and the length of this road may be calculated at about 12 English miles. We may then provisionally place Alone at Watercrock, and Galava at Ambleside. From Ambleside a track ran 18 miles over two mountain passes, Wrynose and Hardknot, to Muncaster and Ravenglass, where, on the shore of a large shallow harbour formed by the mouth of the Esk, are the still notable traces of a Roman fort. Its ancient name is not known. The only suggestion ever ventured by any responsible writer identifies it with Ravonia, which the Ravenna Geographer places somewhere in or near Cumberland or Westmorland. But it is pretty plain that Ravonia is merely a copyist's curtailment of Bravoniacum, the name of the Roman fort at Kirkby Thore in the Eden valley. We may then provisionally place Clanoventa at Ravenglass.

It is not altogether an unsuitable end for an Iter. Whether the trade between Ireland and Britain was ever so great as Chancellor Ferguson in a well-known passage assumed,¹ may be doubted, but doubtless there was a little intercourse, and some of it might have passed through Ravenglass harbour. The chief importance, however, of a post at Muncaster was perhaps military rather than commercial. It formed a section, and apparently the most southern section, of the coast-defence of west Cumberland, which, in turn, formed the flank of the line of Hadrian's Wall. Very possibly, though direct evidence is wanting,

¹ *Hist. of Cumberland*, 1890, p. 62. Compare my list of Roman remains found in Ireland in *English Hist. Review* 1913,

pp. 1-12. It does not seem that Ireland traded much with any part of the Roman Empire.

a road connected the fort at Muncaster with the Moresby fort, 18 miles north of it, and thus with Uxellodunum and the north.

I therefore advance the suggestion that the 'tenth Iter' started from Ravenglass and ran over Wrynose by the top of Windermere to Kendal. It is, I believe, a new suggestion, though General Sir John Woodford, whose manuscripts are quoted by Chancellor Ferguson,¹ seems to have anticipated some of it. I also believe that it is better than any previous theory, which is not saying much in its favour. The two principal rivals appear to be (1) Whitley Castle on the Maiden Way in the south Tyne valley near Alston, and (2) Old Carlisle. The former was suggested or adopted by Watkin, with an alteration in the numerals of the Itinerary; the main objection to it is that the Maiden Way does not stop at Whitley Castle, but passes on to Carvoran (Magna) on Hadrian's Wall and perhaps north of the Wall to Bewcastle: beyond this there is no further road. A section of the Itinerary might reasonably have started from Bewcastle, or from the Wall; it would hardly start from an intermediate station which was not either an end or a junction. Similarly, Old Carlisle, suggested by John Hodgson and accepted by Chancellor Ferguson, is merely a stage on the road from Maryport (Uxellodunum) to Carlisle; no certain roads meet here, and nothing begins here.

It has been also suggested that Clanoventa was at Maryport. To this view many objections might be urged; that actually Maryport bore the name Uxellodunum is perhaps the most obvious, but another objection deserves notice. Two channels cross the Lake Hills from east to west, a natural passage from Kendal by the top of Windermere and Wrynose down the Esk to Ravenglass, and a natural passage from Penrith by Keswick and the Derwent to Workington. As is well known, and as I have said above, the Romans used the former. It does not appear that they used the latter, though they held the lower Derwent by their fort at Papcastle (Aballaba). Despite assertions to the contrary, no Roman road or fort has been traced

¹ *Hist. of Cumberland*. p. 36. I know no more of these papers than this one reference.

at or anywhere near Keswick. North Lakeland, the region of Thirlmere, Derwentwater, Buttermere and Bassenthwaite, and the wild slopes of Skiddaw and the Caldbeck Fells, were all left unoccupied by the Romans. I have been able, by excavation, to prove their temporary presence at Caermot, in the parish of Torpenhow, above the north end of Bassenthwaite, and no doubt other temporary sites will be discovered as excavation progresses. Of permanent forts and roads nothing has been proved, or seems likely to be proved, within the limits of Ambleside on the south, Papcastle on the west, Old Carlisle on the north, and Old Penrith (Plumpton Wall) and Brougham Castle on the east. It is therefore impossible to trace the 'tenth Iter' to Maryport, because to try to do so involves crossing a region where Roman roads are wholly wanting and which the Romans deliberately avoided.

NOTE.—Metrologists seem now to equate the normal Roman mile with 1480 or 1481 metres, that is, with $1618\frac{1}{2}$ or $1619\frac{3}{8}$ yards. Twelve English miles are, then, a trifle of 80 yards longer than thirteen Roman miles. Students of provincial roads, however, especially in upland regions, hardly need to trouble much about the difference between the English and the Roman mile for units of distance under fifteen or even twenty miles.

Occasionally, of course, one meets in the provinces mileage which, though styled 'millia passuum,' is slightly different. In Roman Africa, for example, on the road from Capsa to Tacape, the milestones found by the industrious French archaeologists are said to stand about 1600 metres (1750 yards) apart, but we have no reason to suppose any such plainly local variation in Britain.