

## ON THE ROMAN INSCRIPTIONS AT COLCHESTER.

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That Colchester occupies the site of the Roman *Camulodunum* is, I think I may now say with certainty, the opinion of almost every antiquary of note. Possibly there are still some living who incline to the theory that Maldon represents the site, but the absence of any remains of buildings there, whilst Colchester abounds with them, is conclusive evidence to my mind on the point. But although everything at Colchester of the Roman period is found to be on a grand scale, especially the walls, it is a matter of surprise that so few inscriptions, and those nearly all sepulchral, have been found. The only hypothesis to account for this seems to be, that every inscribed stone found in the middle ages was utilised by the large population still resident on the site, for building or other purposes, and by this means the stones, if ever afterwards disinterred, were completely despoiled of their inscriptions.

The first inscription recorded to have been found at Colchester is given in the *Museum Disneianum*, part i, p. 99, fol. xlv, fig. 15. It was discovered in 1713, and is now preserved in the Disney collection at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. It is a tombstone and is inscribed.

CONSIDIA VENERIA

FILIA. V. A. III. D. XXX.

CONSIDIA NATALIS

MATER. V. A. XXXV.

*i.e. Considia Veneria Filia vixit annos iii dies xxx  
Considia Natalis Mater vixit annos xxxv.* "Considia Veneria (the) daughter lived three years thirty days, Considia Natalis (the) mother lived thirty-five years."

In the "Tesoro Britannico" (1719) by Haym, mention is made of a Roman oculist's stamp found at Colchester, subsequently described by many authors, amongst them by Mr. Albert Way in vol. vii of the *Archæological Journal*, p. 357. It bore the inscriptions,—

Q. IVLI MVERRANI MELI  
NVM AD. CLARITATEM.

Q. IVLI MVERRANI STACTV  
M OPOBALSAMAT AD CA—

The inscription on the side reads: *Q. Iuli Murrani melinum ad claritatem*. "The *melinum* (an eye salve) of Quintus Julius Murranus for clearness of vision." That on the other side is: *Q. Ivli Murrani stactum opobalsamat (um) ad ca-(liginem)*. "The balsamic stactum of Quintus Julius Murranus for weakness of the eyes."

Morant, in the Colchester volume of his "History of Essex," p. 195, and pl. II, fig. 10, describes a Roman ring "of coarse silver" that had been found previous to 1768, inscribed in reversed letters.—

L V  
C I A  
N I

It was then in the possession of Charles Gray, Esq. It reads, *Luciani*, (The ring) of Lucianus. The next discovery appears to have been that of a marble stone (probably an altar), now lost. Morant does not give it in his Colchester volume, as it was only found Nov. 14th, 1764, but he gave a copy of the inscription to the Society of Antiquaries, which is preserved in their minutes. (Vide *Inventorium Sepulchrale*, p. 213). Gough, in his 1789 edition of Camden's *Britannia*, vol. ii, p. 58, also published it. He read it as follows:—

N V M I N I B  
A V G  
E T . M E R C V D E O  
A N D E S C O C I  
V O V . C O M I  
L I C O . A E S V R I  
L I N I . L I B E R T V S  
A R A M O P E R E  
M A R O N I O  
D . S . D .

and calls it an inscription "to a new topical deity." It is evident that the fourth, fifth, and sixth lines are erroneously given, destroying the sense of the whole inscription, with the exception of the three first lines, from which we learn that it was dedicated "To the divinities of the Augustus (the reigning Emperor) and to the god Mercury."

In 1820 (*circa*) there was found at "The Turrets" a bronze stamp, now preserved in the Colchester Museum, bearing the inscription—

P. F.  
HYGINI

Professor Hübner (*Corpus Inscr. Latin.*, vol. vii, No. 1322) suggests the reading *P. F(lavii?) Hygini*, or in other words that it was the stamp of Publius Flavius Hyginus.

In 1821, in excavating the site for the Colchester Hospital, there was found, near to where the celebrated sphinx was discovered, the fragment of a Roman tombstone, the lettering on which was—

. . . . .  
AE . BIS  
BIS . > LEG  
> LEG . III . AV  
EG . XX . VAL V  
DVS . NICAE  
A . MILITAVI  
IXIT . ANN  
. . . . .

There are portions of letters remaining in the two lines which I have marked with dots, but they are too imperfect to be made out. Professor Hübner (*Corpus Inscr. Latin.*, No. 91) reads the inscription, with the exception of the first and part of the second lines, as "*centurio leg(ionis) . . . . centurio leg(ionis) III Aug(ustæ) (centurio leg(ionis) Val(eria) V(ictricis) (Oriun)dus Nicae(a in) (Bithyni) a militavi(t) (annos) . . . . (v)ixit ann(os) . . . .*" The centurial mark > for the word *centurio* will be noticed in the second and third lines. This stone is now in the Colchester Museum.

Another fragment of a sepulchral inscription, found at the same time and now preserved in the Disney collection at Cambridge, reads thus (free of ligatures):—

M  
VMVLO . TEG  
RABILIS . IVVE  
CVNCTI . MVC  
ERVNT . . . .  
NE

The first line has certainly been D . M for *Diis Manibus*. The *ascia* or axe is sculptured on the stone between these two letters, a frequent occurrence on Roman

tombstones. Professor Hübner (*Corpus Inscr. Latin*, No. 92) reads the second and third lines as “(hoc t)umulo teg(untur),” and “(ossa mī)rabilis iuve (nis),” which is very uncertain; of the remainder nothing can be made out from its fragmentary state.

These stones were first engraved in Cromwell’s History of Colchester, 1825 (vol. ii, p. 374), and again described in Wright’s History of Essex, vol. i, pp. 295-6.

In 1850 a fragment of another tombstone was found bearing the inscription—

D  
A V R  
A A I

It was the right hand (proper) half of a tombstone, and had been clamped to another stone, which was not found, and which contained the remaining portion of the inscription (*Journal Brit. Archl. Assn.*, vol. vi, p. 446).

In 1854 there was discovered in the large Roman *cloaca* or sewer, excavated by Dr. Duncan and others, a fragment of a marble tablet inscribed in large and fine letters.—

H I C  
I

It is now preserved in the Museum. (Vide *Proc. Essex Arch. Soc.*, vol. i, p. 210).

At the meeting of the Institute at Norwich in 1847 there was exhibited a Roman *cochlear* or spoon found near the western wall of Colchester eight feet beneath the surface. It was then in the possession of Mrs. Thorley, and was inscribed—

AETERNVS · VIVAS.

*i.e.*, *mayst thou live, Aeternus!* It is not said of what metal it was composed,<sup>1</sup> but the letters were inlaid and resembled *niello*. (Vide Norwich vol. of Institute Catalogue, p. xxviii, and plate at p. xxvii).

At the Chichester meeting of the Institute in 1853, the late Lord Braybrooke exhibited a Roman ring found at Colchester bearing the inscription—

Θ E P M I A

The letters were on an intaglio, and beneath them was a sphinx-like figure. The reading is simply THERMIA,

<sup>1</sup> I have since ascertained that it is of bronze.

Another gold signet ring found at Colchester, and also in the late Lord Braybrooke's possession, is engraved with two heads facing each other, and above them are the letters—

I . M . P

It is difficult to understand the reading of these letters. The ring is described by Lord Braybrooke in vol. ii, p. 63, of the Essex Archæological Society's Transactions.

In 1853 there was discovered on the Lexden road at West Lodge, the property of Mr. John Taylor, which stands partially upon the site of a Roman cemetery, a fine cinerary urn of Durobrivian (Castor) ware, with a cover. It was nine inches in height and six in diameter, and contained a "bottle of straw coloured pottery and a red 'Samian' dish." It is covered with bas reliefs, divided into three groups. One consists of two stags, a hare, and a dog, with various ornaments introduced; the second consists of two men with a bear between them; and the third of two gladiators fighting. Above the heads of these latter is an inscription traced with some sharp instrument, and concealed by the lid or cover, until the latter was lifted. The inscription is—

SECUNDVS MARIO MEMNON SAC VIII VALENTINVS LEGIONIS XXX.

As the thirtieth legion was never in England, these scenes must refer to events that happened on the Continent. The first two words, I opine, shew that the urn was a gift from Secundus to Marius (as Mr. C. Roach Smith thinks). It is by no means clear what the meaning of the remainder is. If SAC, stands for SEC. the first portion refers to a *secutor* named Memnon, who had apparently been the victor nine times. If the other figure be that of a *retiarius*, he is the vanquished party. In any event his name seems to have been Valentinus, of the thirtieth legion. This vase is still preserved in the Colchester Museum.

In 1865 a remarkable green glass drinking cup of the Roman period was found in the same cemetery, on the Lexden road. Though only three to four inches in height, it bears the representation of four chariots in succession, with the names of the charioteers over them, the inscription being—



FIGURE OF A ROMAN CENTURION.

HIERAX . VA . OLYMPAE . VA . ANTILOCE . VA . CRESCES . AV .

The reading being, doubtless, *Hierax va(le) Olympae va(le)*, *Antiloce va(le)*, *Cresce(n)s Ar(e)*, thus indicating *Crescens* as the winner. This cup is now in the British Museum, where I recently inspected it.

In 1868 Mr. George Joslin, who had purchased a piece of ground in Beverley Road for the purpose of making excavations on the site of a large Roman cemetery existing there, discovered a large sepulchral slab of fine oolite six feet high, two feet four inches wide, and eight inches thick, in good preservation, bearing the figure of a Roman centurion in a sort of recess, and beneath it the inscription—

M . FAVON . M . F . POL . FACI  
 LIS . > LEG . XX . VERECVND  
 VS . ET . NOVICIVS . LIB . POSV  
 ERVNT . H . S . E .

*i.e. M(arcus) Favon(ius) M(arci) F(ilius) Pol(lia) Facilis centurio Leg(ionis) vicesimae Verecundus et Novicius Lib(erti) posuerunt. H(ic) S(itus) E(st)*, or translated, “Marcus Favonius Facilis, the son of Marcus of the tribe Pollia, a centurion of the twentieth legion. Verecundus and Novicius his freedmen placed this. He lies here.” From the absence of the letters v. v after the numerals of the legion, it is probable that this monument is of a very early date, possibly before the insurrection of Boadicea. The stone had apparently been purposely broken, and the upper portion thrown down on its face at some remote period. The lower portion which bore the inscription was still standing *in situ* at a depth of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet below the surface of the ground. Near it was found a leaden cylindrical box with a lid containing the bones. On the back of the stone are the letters—

T V L

probably the abbreviation of the sculptor's name (*Tullius*). It is still in Mr. Joslin's possession. Since writing the above I have been informed that some antiquaries dissent from the idea of the stone being of an early period of the Roman sway, on the ground of some of the letters of the inscription being ligulate. In reply to this I would observe that in the pig of lead dated A.D. 60, and bearing the name of Nero, found at Stockbridge, Hants, we find a great part of the inscription ligulate, so that ligulate inscriptions are not confined to a later period.

There are one or two other minor inscriptions found at Colchester, which I will now refer to. They are—

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4).
PRIMV .	PETRONI	POMP. NI .	. . RALIA.

The first of these, which wants the last letter, is on a tile at the Museum and reads *Primus*. The second occurs on a bronze helmet now in the British Museum, and which is twice stamped with the letters PETRONI (probably the genitive of *Petronius*) near the neck. The third occurs on the handle of a *patella* or *simpulum* of bronze found in a field near the town in 1863. (Vide *Archæologia*, vol. xxxix, p. 508). Different readings of it have been given. The Rev. J. H. Pollexfen, in the *Archæologia*, reads it as simply POMPONI, and regards it as the stamp of the maker, but Professor Hübner (*Corpus Inscr. Latin.* vol. vii, No. 1323) reads it as (*L*) *Pomp(oni) Ni(co)*. The fourth is on a large vase of white ware or *olla*, now preserved in the Museum, the front of which represents a human face (very similar to a vase discovered at Lincoln, and bearing an inscription to Mercury, engraved in the *Proc. Soc. of Antiq.*, vol. iii, 2nd series, p. 440). The letters, which are in black, occur on the back of it, and are of good formation, but the inscription being imperfect nothing can be made of it.

Another bronze Roman stamp found in Colchester, and preserved in the Museum there, bears the inscription—

BIOKNO.

The inscription (which is a barbarous one) was communicated to me in 1873 by Mr. Gunner, the curator of the Museum. The same barbarous word occurs in pottery found at Colchester, but its meaning is unknown.

There have also been found at Colchester a number of roundels or tesserae of greyish earthenware bearing barbarous words, such as ETKERON, &c., and on some of them are numerals. In one instance XVI occurs, accompanying the figure of a galley with rowers. I have rubbings of most of them, but until antiquaries are agreed as to their being genuine Roman relics, I refrain from noticing them. Perhaps some of the members of the Institute will embrace this opportunity of inspecting them. With these exceptions I believe that the whole of the Colchester inscriptions are noticed in these observations.