

ART. XXV.—*Roman Inscriptions from Cumberland.* By
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THE brief note which follows contains three Roman inscriptions recently found in Cumberland. The first has not been published before; the second has not yet been published fully; all three are of distinct interest and deserve to be recorded in these *Transactions*.

I.—KNELLS, NEAR CARLISLE.

Mrs. Hodgson has sent me word and Mr. L. E. Hope has added rubbings and a photograph of a Roman inscription now in the possession of Mrs. Fell, at Knells, some three miles north-east of Carlisle. Its history appears to be quite unknown, but it was doubtless found somewhere not very many miles away, and its Roman character is clear. It is a block of red sandstone, 32 inches high, 17 inches wide and 15 thick: the top is now crowned by a seventeenth-century sundial: the front is occupied by a sunk panel 20 inches high by 14 wide, on which the material supplied to me by Mrs. Hodgson and Mr. Hope shews clearly four lines of letters, $3\frac{1}{2}$ –4 inches tall, as follows:—

B O N O
R E I
PUBLICÆ
N A T O

Bono reipublicae nato, 'born for the good of the state,' is a common fourth-century formula applied to an Emperor. Usually it occurs on milestones or on blocks of stone which might have formed parts of milestones or roadside stones. Once or twice, as for example on a stone

found at Wroxeter which I have figured in the *Victoria History of Shropshire* (i., 247), it occurs in forms which do not much look like milestones. The Knells specimen may well be part of a milestone, like the similarly-shaped inscription of Diocletian found long ago in the same neighbourhood, at Old Wall (Lapid. Sept. n. 450). A stone bearing the actual formula *bono r.p. nato* seems to have been found at Lanercost about 1600, which was copied by Bainbrigg, but it has since vanished.* The arrangement of the letters on it seems to indicate that our stone is not identical with it (Corpus, vii., 1189).

2.—OLD PENRITH.

In March, 1908, a Roman altar was found in the course of field-work about 100 yards north of the Roman fort Voreda, now called Plumpton Wall or Old Penrith. I am indebted to Dr. J. F. Haswell of Penrith and to Mr. Harris of Brackenburgh Tower, the owner, for information respecting it and for help and hospitality when I went to see it. It is a large altar, 58 inches high, 24 inches wide, with the usual jug and dish carved on the (spectator's) left side, and the axe and knife on the right. The lettering occupies nine lines; parts of lines 6–8 are obscure.

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

* It is not recorded in Bainbrigg's papers printed earlier in this volume. But it is included in a list of Bainbrigg's stones made in 1722 by one Hayton, and now preserved in the Bodleian Library (MS. Gough gen. top. 36, fo. 44).

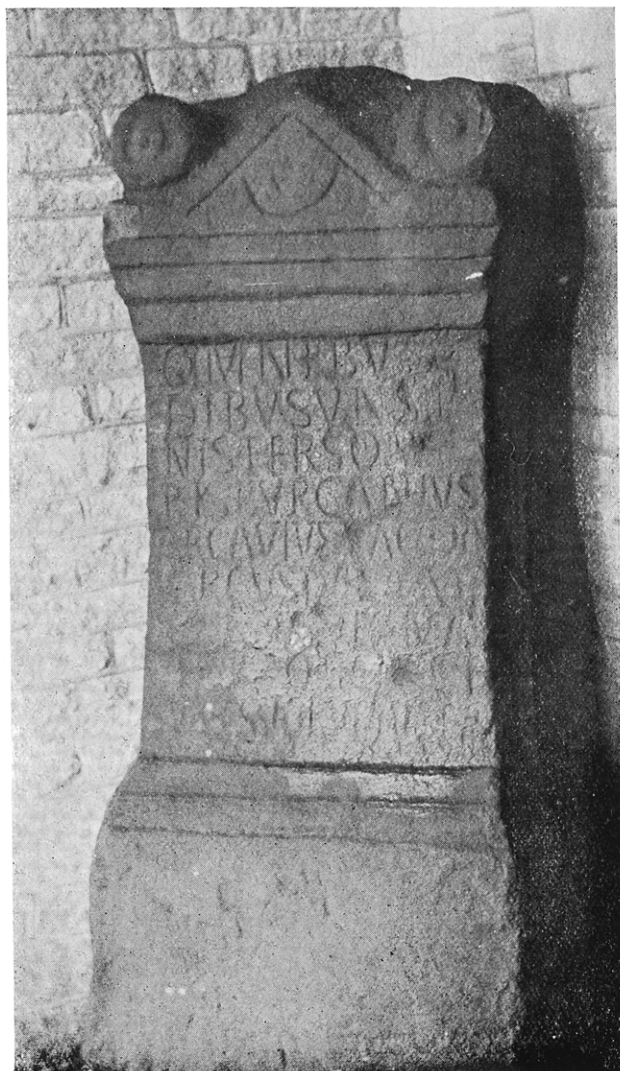


PLATE A.—ROMAN ALTAR FROM OLD PENRITH.

TO FACE P. 470.

Omnibus dibus Unsenis Fersomaris, Burcanius, Arcavius [V]agda[v]arcustus, . ovi . . iarus, vetera[ni pr]o salute sua et suorum v[otum] s[olvunt] l[ibentes] m[erito] .

'To all the gods Unseni Fersomari, Burcanius, Arcavius Vagdavarcustus, . . . iarus, veterans, for the safety of themselves and their families (set up this altar) in fulfilment of their vow.'

When I first heard of the altar, the names of the deities, *Unsenis Fersomaris*, seemed to me too like 'unseen & fearsome' to be part of a genuine Roman inscription. But there seems to be no doubt either of the reading or of the genuineness of the object. I have, however, failed to get either from Germanic or Celtic philologists in England or Germany any explanation of these two words. The names of the dedicators are less obscure. As Professor A. von Domaszewski has pointed out to me, Burcanius resembles the ancient name of the island Borkum, in Greek *Βορχανίς* or *Βυρχανίς*, while Vagdavarcustus, if it be rightly so restored, is akin to the name of the German goddess Vagdavercustis, worshipped in what is now Holland. It seems, therefore, that we have to do with a number of German soldiers worshipping presumably German deities, and in this connexion Professor Domaszewski points out that the German 'Matronae Fernovineae' exhibit at least the same first syllable as 'Fersomaris.' A similar group of Germans occurs on an altar now in Carlisle Museum (Tullie House catalogue, No. 4) dedicated by 'Durio and Ramio and Trupo and Lurio, Germans,' to the Celtic deity Maponus and the Numina Augustorum. The origin of this altar is doubtful. It has usually been attributed conjecturally to Plumpton Wall: so it is listed in the Lapidarium (No. 793) and the Corpus (No. 332). But according to W. Nicolson (prebendary, archdeacon and bishop of Carlisle, 1681-1718), it was really found about 1688 'at Brampton in Gillesland,' that is, in or near Castlesteads: see his letter dated 5 June, 1693, among

the papers of Edward Lhuyd in the Bodleian library at Oxford (MS. Ashmole 1816, fo. 466). Nicolson was a competent antiquary and he wrote long before anyone else who mentions the inscription, so that his evidence may be accepted as final.

The new altar has been published in the *Journal* of the British Archæological Association (1908, p. 142) with an illustration here by leave reproduced. There, however, only the first 5 lines could be given: the remainder of the text I have since deciphered. It is proper to add that the superfluous *l* in line 1 probably represents a commencement of *M* too near the preceding *o*; in line 3 the final *Λ* and in line 7 the letters *TER* are not certain; in line 6 the letter before *ovi* may be *P*.

3.—OLD CARLISLE.

Early in 1908 an inscribed sandstone slab, 13 inches wide, was found about 100 yards from the Roman fort of Old Carlisle in the parish of Westward and was removed to the offices of Messrs. Carrick & Dudding, County Court Buildings, Wigton. I am indebted to Mr. R. H. Forster, F.S.A. and Mr. H. Dudding for photographs and information. The stone is broken at the top, but it is not clear that any letters are lost.

H E R C V L I
S O R T E S . S I G I
L I V S . E M E R I T
D . D . S . P

Herculi sortes Sigilius Emerit(us) d(at) d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia).

'Sigilius Emeritus (or perhaps: Sigilius, a discharged soldier) gives the due share to Hercules at his personal cost.' That is, the slab represents the share of booty due to the god. The share (or tithe) of Hercules, due at the winning of booty or other gain, is mentioned in ancient



PLATE B.—ROMAN SLAB FROM OLD CARLISLE.

TO FACE P. 472.

Roman literature of all periods and also on inscriptions. It is interesting to find so genuinely Roman a usage appearing at a Roman fort in northern Britain.

The inscription has been published in the *Journal* of the British Archæological Association, 1908, p. 144. The Council of the Association has kindly lent the block from which the annexed plate is printed.
