ART. V.—*The Roman milestone at Middleton in Lonsdale.* By ERIC BIRLEY, F.S.A.

Read at the site, September 2nd, 1953.

THE Society paid its first visit to this milestone seventy years ago, during the June meeting of 1883, and two months later W. Thompson Watkin gave it a short paper on the stone's discovery in 1836 and on the significance of the mileage inscribed on it. Since then, there have been three further visits, in 1911 (when Anthony Moorhouse described it briefly) and in 1924 and 1937, when R. G. Collingwood was the speaker, his accounts being reproduced or at least summarised in the Proceedings of the two meetings. But there is more to be said about the stone, and in particular about the significance of its Roman inscription, than has been said hitherto, and some of Collingwood's observations stand in need of correction. It seems permissible, therefore, for me to devote a short paper to the subject. I propose to deal with it in three sections, treating in turn the bibliography of the stone, the circumstances of its discovery and re-erection, and the problem of the record of mileage.

First, then, the bibliography. The original publication of the inscription was by W. Thompson Watkin in the *Archæological Journal,* xxxi (1874) 353 f., in the course of a paper listing and describing British inscriptions omitted by Huebner when he was compiling C.I.L. VII; Watkin noted that the stone itself had been alluded to in Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of England* (edit. 1849, article "Middleton"), and in the Post Office Directory of the county, but without mention of the inscription. Huebner took prompt note of Watkin's paper, and the learned world knows the brief text of this milestone as *Ephemeris Epigraphica* III (1877) 119,

where a reference is given to the *Archæological Journal* but not, despite Collingwood's statement (CW2 xxv 367), to Lewis. It was no doubt Watkin's note which prompted the Society to inspect the stone during its visit to the Lune valley in June 1883; we shall be seeing presently that there is a useful account of its discovery, based on information from a local clergyman, included in the Proceedings of that meeting (CW1 vii 85). Two months later, Watkin contributed his short paper to the Society's August meeting (CW1 vii 109 f.); it refers back to his primary publication, but for the circumstances of the original discovery and of the re-erection of the stone it clearly takes into account the local information which had been obtained during the Society's visit. There is only a bare reference, in the Proceedings of the meeting of September 1911, to the fact that Anthony Moorhouse described the milestone (CW2 xii 411). My next reference comes from a paper read before the Bradford Historical and Antiquarian Society in 1915, and printed in the *Bradford Antiquary,* N.S., vi (1916), 243-66—"The Roman road from Ribchester to Low Borrow Bridge", by Percival Ross; at p. 260 he gives a brief account of the stone, adding (for full measure) an excellent half-tone view of it, taken by Foster Lingard in September 1916; I shall have occasion to refer to Ross's paper again, in due course. When the Society next visited the stone, in September 1924, R. G. Collingwood read a short note upon it (printed in full, it seems, in CW2 xxv 367 f.); his version of its discovery is based on Watkin's original paper and not on that printed in our own *Transactions,* while he puts forward a variant reading of the Roman inscription, suggesting that it was changed in Roman times from LIII to LIIII. He seems to have discarded that view subsequently, for the Royal Commission's *Westmorland* Inventory (1936), which devotes a short paragraph to the stone (p. 170) and illustrates it with a small half-tone (on plate 4), gives the

reading unequivocally as LIII; Collingwood had read the proofs of the volume, so that we may be justified in assuming that he approved of the reading. His account at the September meeting of 1937, as summarised in its *Proceedings* (CW2 xxxviii 296 f.), makes no specific reference to the precise mileage, but has a new suggestion to offer as to the significance of the text: we shall be considering it in due course.

So much for the printed records. The circumstances of the milestone's discovery are not absolutely certain. Watkin at first wrote that it was found in making a fence for a plantation, and that it is preserved on the spot where it was found; that is the version accepted by Collingwood in 1924. But when our Society paid its first visit, in June 1883, the Rev. W. B. Grenside[1] informed the Editor that it had been found "buried within a couple of hundred yards of where it now stands"; it seems reasonable to attribute to Mr Grenside the rather fuller version incorporated by Watkin in his paper of August 1883:—

> "In the year 1836 a labourer whilst ploughing on land belonging to the late Mr W. Moore of Grimeshill, struck upon a large stone slightly beneath the surface of the ground. Upon examination, it was found to be a cylindrical column, and was ordered by Mr Moore to be dug out . . . Mr Moore had the stone removed and set upright in an adjoining plantation, which is said to be about 200 yards from the spot where it was found. He added a modern inscription, supplied by Dr Lingard, the celebrated historian, to the following effect: SOLO ERVTVM / RESTITVIT / GVL MOORE / AN MDCCCXXXVI by this means recording the fact of its re-erection by his orders . . . The stone must have been previously noticed as forming an obstacle to the plough, though it was not dug out, for many marks made by that implement, are observable upon it."

A footnote, however, retains the original version as an alternative, namely that it was found "in digging to make a fence for the plantation where it is preserved." Mr

[1] For him, cf. CW2 xiii 422 f. (b. 1821, a friend of Lingard, d. 1913).

Grenside's local information may be given the preference, no doubt; but we may regret that he did not explain what led Mr Moore to have the stone set up some distance away both from the find-spot and from the present road. I have quoted the modern inscription from Watkin's paper, but I cannot resist adding an extract from the account of the Society's first visit, if only for its testimony to the diligence of our predecessors seventy years ago: —

"As the party left Middleton Hall rain began to fall very heavily, and it continued during the afternoon. Pausing at Grimes Hill, the party walked to the Roman milestone about one hundred yards from the road. It is situated in a plantation, and, at the request of the Editor of the Society's Transactions, Dr Parker scrambled over and dictated the inscription letter by letter to the expectant multitude . . . The anticlimax of the GVL MOORE after the first three lines was greeted with much laughter . . . The journey was shortly resumed, but, owing to the rain, was becoming anything but pleasant . . ."

Now let us turn to consider the significance of the Roman inscription, M.P. LIII.[2] Watkin realised that the distance of 53 Roman miles would correspond well enough with the distance to Carlisle. He suggested Carvoran as an alternative, indeed, since it was thought at the time that the Roman road through the Lune valley joined the Stainmore road at Kirkby Thore, whence the Maiden Way leads over the Cross Fell range to join the Stanegate at Carvoran; but, as Collingwood was to remind the Society in 1924, Percival Ross's careful survey of the road northward from Low Borrow Bridge (CW2 XX 1-15) has demonstrated that it meets the Stainmore road at Brougham, so that Carlisle is the only reasonable measuring-point to the north of our stone — and, to judge by the Ordnance Survey map of Roman Britain, 53 Roman miles is the correct distance between Carlisle and Middleton. There is no suitable base-point 53 miles

[2] The reading is indisputable; the extra I which Collingwood, in 1924, claimed to be a Roman addition to the text, seems best interpreted as one of the series of plough-marks which Watkin was the first to refer to.

to the south or south-east, along the known Roman road-system, and we may therefore follow Watkin and Collingwood in taking Carlisle to have been in fact the *caput viae,* the place from which distances along the road through the Lune valley to Burrow and the south were measured. What then?

Collingwood, in his first account of the stone, pointed out that it is highly unusual, in omitting all reference to the name and titles of an emperor, as well as in giving a mileage at all—which most Roman milestones in Britain omitted to do; in his account of 1937, he suggested that the peculiarity of the text might be due to the road having been constructed or kept in repair "by some local authority, perhaps the municipality of Carlisle." That is a stimulating but untenable explanation. Let us note that it assumes that Roman Carlisle did at some stage receive a charter as a *municipium* (though there is no specific evidence for it, I am ready to believe, by analogy with developments elsewhere in the Roman empire, that that was in fact the case); but it also assumes that the charter gave it a *territorium* stretching fifty miles and more to the south, into a wild district which must surely have remained under military government, based on forts such as that at Low Borrow Bridge[3]—and that the town-council of *Luguvalium* was responsible for maintaining a strategic road in the most distant fringes of its territory, although the nearer stretches of the same road, between Carlisle and Brougham, have yielded milestones of the normal type, with the names and titles of emperors, such as Collingwood's theory implicitly refers to official road-work by organs of the central government. Construction or repair by some local authority cannot explain this case; and indeed Collingwood never faced the real problem of the inscription, namely its giving a distance measured specifically from Carlisle.

[3] Cf. CW2 xlvii 1f.

In the Roman road-system, it was common for distances along the trunk-roads in the provinces to be measured from the provincial capital, though milestones on the connecting links between self-governing communities, for the maintenance of which those communities were responsible, frequently gave distances from the particular towns whose officials had set them up; and in France it is often possible to define the extent of a particular Gallic *civitas* by noting how far its inscriptions on stones of this type stretch along the roads which lead away from its principal town. But that is enough to show the vital flaw in Collingwood's reasoning: only if *Luguvalium* itself had been mentioned as the road-head might we have been justified in drawing a comparable conclusion from this stone. Not all distances were measured from provincial capitals or from self-governing *civitates,* of course; for example, the milestones from the Stanegate and from the Military Way respectively, found on Cawfields Common by John Clayton, seem to give mileages from Corstopitum (in one case) and from Portgate (in the other)—that, at least, is the most simple explanation of the figures: in the case of military link-roads, it would not be unreasonable to measure outwards from the points at which they leave the main trunk-road.

The route through the Lune valley, however, must be regarded as a main trunk-line; indeed, Percival Ross made a case (CW2 xx 1-15) for supposing that it was the original Roman road to Carlisle from the south, since its alignment is continued northwards from Brougham, where the Stainmore road runs into it at an angle. In its earliest phase, we may be justified in supposing, distances along this road will have been measured from the south—if not from London (by the Flavian period already the capital of Roman Britain), then conceivably from Chester or Wroxeter (depending on the period at which it was first engineered, and the headquarters of the legion responsible for its construction and maintenance). But

measurement southwards from Carlisle seems to require a different setting, in a later period. It presupposes that Carlisle has acquired special importance in relation to the administration of the main road-system; and if we dismiss Collingwood's municipal authority, as I think that we are bound to do, it seems necessary to conclude that the special importance was that of a centre of imperial administration — either as a command headquarters (as we may most conveniently term it) within the province of Britain, or as the capital of one of the provinces into which Britain was ultimately subdivided.

The former alternative need not detain us very long. It is true that, in the Hadrianic system, the commander of the *ala Petriana* at Stanwix, just across the river from Carlisle, was the senior officer north of York or Chester, and in an emergency he might well be given responsibility for the command of all troops on the Wall or in its immediate hinterland; but there is no reason to suppose that a *praefectus equitum,* even of the senior grade in command of an *ala milliaria,* would be entrusted with the general administration of a district as large as that here in question; if the governor of Britain had delegated his authority over the Carlisle region to anyone, he would surely have placed it under the hand of one of his legionary legates. And, in any case, the milestones of the second century (though admittedly they are rare in Britain) seem to have been meticulous in recording the full names and titles of the emperors concerned.

The second alternative seems more promising, though it necessarily involves a large measure of speculation. Severus is recorded by Herodian as having divided Britain into two provinces in 197, immediately after his defeat of Albinus in the final battle at Lugdunum in February; and the two provinces of the third century had become four by the time of Constantine, and five in the reorganisation effected by Count Theodosius. The relative positions and boundaries of the fourth-century provinces are

entirely unknown (though analogy with the Continent would allow us to infer that *Britannia Prima* occupied a portion of the third-century Upper province, and *Britannia Secunda* represented part of the former *Britannia Inferior*); it might seem simplest to suppose that Carlisle became the capital of one of the provinces of the Diocletianic system. In support of this view, it could be pointed out that it is precisely in the fourth century that we meet with milestones which disdain to name an emperor at all, contenting themselves with the bare BONO REI PVBLICAE NATO, applicable to any emperor (as long as he remained alive and in authority), which is exemplified by three or four milestones from Britain, one or two of them from our own district. But my impression is that the lettering of the brief inscription on the Middleton milestone is too good for a fourth-century date to be assigned to it; and I am driven to the solution of suggesting that Carlisle was, for a short time from 197 onwards, the capital of Lower Britain when that province was governed by an equestrian procurator—until the boundaries of the province were re-drawn, and its government was entrusted to the praetorian legate of *VI Victrix* at York, by Caracalla in 213. I shall be discussing the evidence, such as it is, and setting forth my arguments in some detail elsewhere (before very long, I hope); for the time being it will perhaps be sufficient to point out that the subdivision of Britain attested by Cassius Dio and by a number of inscriptions, with York and Lincoln in the Lower province and Chester and Caerleon in the Upper, both governed by senatorial legates, of praetorian and consular standing respectively, is difficult to square with the situation revealed by the inscriptions of Severus's own reign—when we find consular governors in control of reconstruction on and close to the Wall, and a legate of *II Augusta* from Caerleon dedicating an altar in Northumberland in person, as though there was still a single military command in Britain. The situation would

be more easily explained if we might suppose that the first subdivision of Britain, recorded by Herodian, left all three legions under the consular legate of the Upper province (initially Virius Lupus, and later Alfenus Senecio), and involved the creation of a relatively small frontier province, garrisoned solely by auxiliaries (in number at least as strong as the legionaries of Upper Britain) and governed by an equestrian procurator. It may be noted that the procurator Oclatinius Adventus is mentioned on two of the inscriptions of Alfenus Senecio, at Risingham and Chesters respectively, and the phenomenon would perhaps be easier to explain if he were in fact the governor of the immediate province, in which the emergency of a major campaign and the need for large-scale reconstruction of ruined forts had made it necessary for the consular governor of the neighbouring Upper province to intervene. We may compare the way in which the consular governor of Syria had more than once to intervene in the affairs of the procuratorial province of Judaea.

Granted that York, where *VI Victrix* was stationed, must at such a stage have been included in Upper Britain, Carlisle seems the only possible site for the capital of the postulated procuratorial province; its military significance, close to the senior officer of the Wall garrison at Stanwix, and to the *Schwerpunkt* of military effort throughout the history of the Hadrianic frontier, hardly needs stressing, and it was without question the largest town north of York. It may be worth adding to the argument, at this stage, the altar first recorded by Camden as found in Cumberland "beyond the Irthing" (C.875, cf. EE IX p. 604, = ILS 9317, assigned by Huebner to Castlesteads), which is a dedication for the health and safety of Caracalla by a *procurator Augusti,* M. Cocceius Nigrinus. Its formula is consistent with the text being an official dedication by a procurator who was also *praeses* (that is to say, the governor of a province and not merely a financial administrator), and we may wonder whether

the altar was not set up at or close to the seat of his administration; it is a pity that the precise find-spot is unknown, but it cannot in any case have been very far from Carlisle. It was presumably dedicated in 212, as soon as the news had come to hand of the emperor's providential escape from the machinations of his younger brother, Geta, and of the latter's well-merited death (that, at least, was the official story): hence the reference to Caracalla's safety as well as to his health.

A year later, however, Caracalla was to make a drastic change; a milestone of 213, from the military way between Rudchester and Haltonchesters, shows the senatorial legate C. Julius Marcus in control of the Wall area, and a series of texts dated to the same year, from a good many northern forts (including Old Penrith and Whitley Castle in our own district), protesting the loyalty and devotion of units of the army of northern Britain to that emperor, suggests that the change may have been due to some shortcomings in the procuratorial province at the time of the struggle for power between the two brothers, if not immediately after the murder of Geta; the literary sources record that the troops in Britain were particularly attached to the latter, and we may wonder whether at first Lower Britain was inclined to accept him in preference to Caracalla. Did the Middleton milestone originally give the name and titles of Geta, above the statement of mileage? It must be admitted that Collingwood, in 1924, was categoric in stating that the record of mileage "is all that has ever been on the stone except the modern inscription"; but on Foster Lingard's photograph of 1916 I noted a suggestion of an erasure on the upper part of the stone, and inspection of the stone itself in 1953 leads me to suggest that M.P. LIII is in fact a secondary inscription, the predecessor of which has been almost completely erased. But that is perhaps as far as I should take my speculations at present. If I am right, the period when Carlisle was capital of Lower Britain cannot have been longer than from 197 to 213; it seems reasonable to

suppose that it was in that period alone (before the Diocletianic reforms brought a radical change in the whole system) that distances along the roads radiating from Carlisle would be measured from it and not, in the case of this trunk-road from the south, from some southern road-head. I must leave for discussion elsewhere the question of the precise boundaries of the postulated equestrian province, and of the exact size of its garrison of auxiliaries, but it may be noted that either Burrow in Lonsdale or Lancaster would have been a suitable frontier-station in the west, whereas in the east there is a good case for supposing that the Tees and the wastes of Stainmore were chosen as the dividing line between the two provinces.

APPENDIX: *The course of the Roman road.*

It remains for me to add a brief note about the course of the Roman road in this stretch. Ross's field-survey in the *Bradford Antiquary,* referred to above, provides an admirable basis for research, but it needs to be reinforced by further work in the field. He concluded (*op. cit.,* 260 f.) that the modern road here runs some way east of the Roman line; to judge by the stretches to north and south, where there are good surface indications, the road must have passed down a slack something like 100 yards west of the position where the milestone now stands (for the record, it may be noted that the plantation of 1836—or of 1883—is now represented by no more than half a dozen trees, which stand unfenced in a straggling group, in the middle of a pasture). But ploughing has obliterated all surface indications hereabouts; even a quarter of a mile further south, where there is a suggestive ridge on the appropriate line, a trial excavation by Mr. J. W. Shepherd, as he has been good enough to tell me, produced no surviving traces of the structure of the road. But there are other stretches, within a mile or two of this site, where the surface indications are markedly more encouraging; it is greatly to be hoped that some of our members who live in the district may have an opportunity of continuing the investigation in the near future. If there was one milestone set up here, there must surely have been others at appropriate intervals along its course, and a planned investigation of the road might, with luck, produce some of them, and add to our epigraphic evidence for the history of its maintenance in the Roman period.

FIG. 1.—The milestone and its setting, looking N.W.

FIG. 2.—The inscribed face (Miss K. S. Hodgson, Past President, behind).

Photographs by H. Skelton

facing p. 62.