ART. I.—A Roman tombstone from Brougham Castle (BROCAVVM) near Penrith. By R. S. O. Tomlin, D.Phil.

Read at Grange-over-Sands, July 9th, 1976.

THE Roman fort of *Brocavum* (Brougham Castle, just south-east of Penrith) had its cemetery nearly half a mile to the east, on the road to Brough-under-Stainmore. Two tombstones were discovered here, in 1828/9 and 1874, near Countess' Pillar.[1] In the same area, north of the road, the foundations of a mausoleum and an uninscribed fragment of a tombstone were found in 1958; and in 1960, inscribed fragments of two tombstones were ploughed up.[2] In 1966 and 1967, in advance of major roadworks for the A66(T), rescue excavation uncovered some 250 burials, mostly cremations, in a cemetery in use from the 2nd to the 4th centuries. Fragments were found of a mausoleum and of eighteen inscribed tombstones.[3] Finally, during spring ploughing in 1974 north of the road, another large fragment was found.[4]

The new fragment (Plate I), like the others, is a slab of local New Red Sandstone, 0.06 m. thick, from 0.42 to 0.49 m. wide, and 0.37 m. high. The inscribed face is unaffected by ploughing, which has scored the back and taken a triangular piece out of the right-hand margin, but its surface has flaked off in places, since it consists of larger and looser grains of sand than the main fabric. This has superficially damaged the lettering, which is more or less regular, with serifs, and triangular medial stops between words. It is still legible:

$$A \ L \ I \ S \cdot V \ I \ X \ I \ T$$
$$\cdot \ L \ X \ X \ X$$
$$S \ \cdot A \ V \ N \ C \ \cdot$$
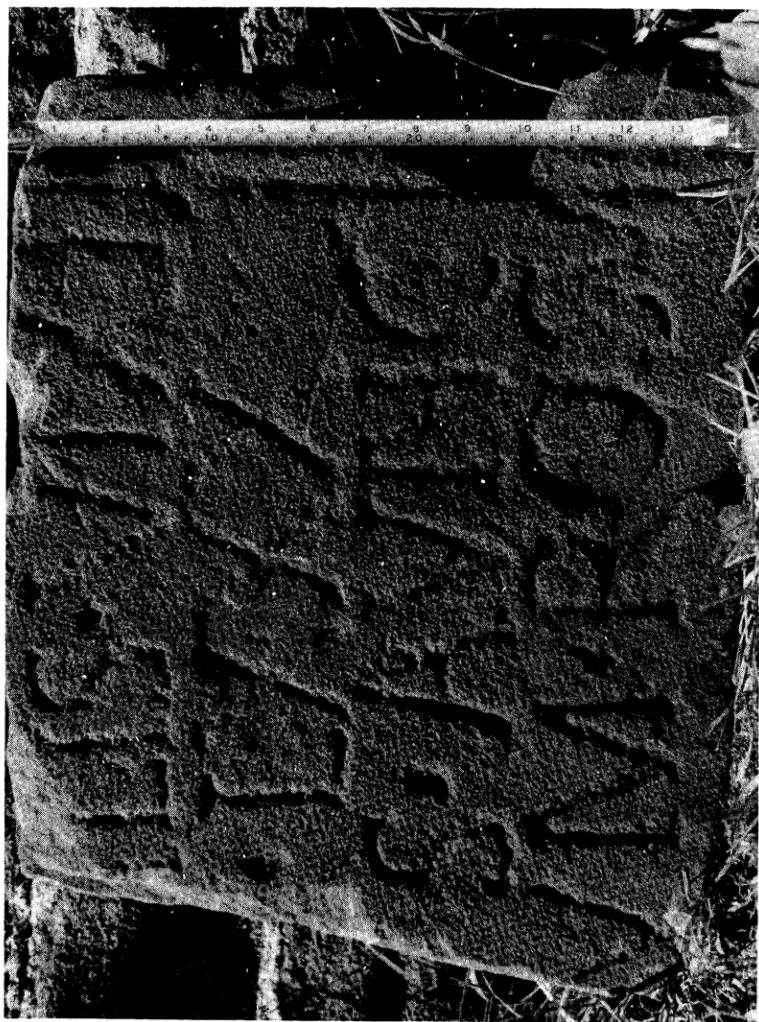$$V \ M \ \cdot \ P \ O \ S \ V$$

B

PLATE I.—Roman tombstone from Brougham Castle (found 1974).

99Stop.

Notes.

This is the R. half of the memorial text of a gabled tombstone like *RIB* 785 from the same cemetery. The R. margin is defined by two vertical grooves, corresponding to two on the L. margin; they would have converged to form a pediment enclosing the usual heading *D(is) M(anibus)*.

Line 1. The fragmentary upright of the first letter slants, so it must be *A*. The stone-cutter seems to have miscalculated: he has crowded the letters, and apparently cut the final *T* in the R. groove, which is interrupted and broadened to form a serif.

Line 2. The space available in the missing portion guarantees that "years" was written in full, but there is nothing to choose between the correct *annos* (which occurs twice in this cemetery) and *annis* (three times). Elsewhere in Cumbria, *annos* is more common.

Line 3. *S* is the end of a personal name, the subject of *posu(it)*. The preceding letter must have been *V*, since *I* (etc.) would have been set close enough to *S* to leave a trace. The (damaged) medial stop after *AVNC* shews that it did not continue into l. 4. Sense requires the expansion *a(v)unc(ulo)* (dative), since an 80-year old man is unlikely to have been survived by his uncle (cf. *RIB* 1830).

Line 4. The formula *titulum posuit* (or similar) is well attested in this cemetery: *RIB* 786, 787, *JRS* 58, 1968, 208 (no. 15). The *V* of *POSV* runs into the R. margin, and the word is probably abbreviated *posu(it)*, cf. *RIB* 786, *pos(uit)* at end of line. There is no Cumbrian parallel for *posuit* broken between lines; l. 4. is certainly the last complete line of text.

The original text thus read:

[D(is) M(anibus)] | [. . . . .]alis vixit | [annis] LXXX
| [. . . . u]s a(v)unc(ulo) | [titul]um posu(it)

"To the spirits of the departed. [. . . . .]alis lived 80 years. [. . . .]us set up the inscription to his uncle."

The restoration of the last line makes it possible to calculate how much is lost, and thus the original width of the tombstone: it was about 0.85 m. wide. Each of the personal names has lost about five letters, and cannot be restored. At least ten names in -*alis*

occur on inscriptions from Roman Britain. The commonest is *Martialis,* which is popular with soldiers, and happens to be about the right length.[5] But the missing name may well have been a variant of a common one, like *Donatalis* at Carlisle.[6]

The original text, apart from the personal names, can be restored because of its similarity to others from the same cemetery. Its interest lies in the strange word *aunc,* and the age of the deceased. The contraction of *avunculo* illustrates the omission of *u(v)* before a second *u,* which is typical of spoken Latin (and hence of the romance languages), as the Romans themselves realised.[7] This dead uncle is the second, if not the third, octogenarian attested in six memorial inscriptions from Brougham.[8] In Roman Britain as a whole, just over twenty tombstones, a tenth of the total number, claim an age at death of 70 or more. But it is ominous that the age claimed is almost without exception divisible by 5, if not 10.[9] Such ages must be estimates only, inevitable in a semi-literate society which did not register births. Nor would it be wise to conjecture, from what is bound to be a tiny and unrepresentative sample, what proportion of the Romano-British population ever reached the age of three score years and ten.[10]

Notes.

[1] NY 546289. R. G. Collingwood and R. P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain,* vol. I (1965), cited elsewhere as *RIB,* 785, 786, 784, 787, 788 probably came from the same cemetery.

[2] *Journal of Roman Studies,* elsewhere cited as *JRS,* 49, 1959, 106; 51, 1961, 193 (nos. 6 and 7).

[3] *JRS* 57, 1967, 177 and 204 (nos. 9-13); 58, 1968, 179 and 208-209 (nos. 15-27). Excavations were centred at NY 54532899, and followed the line of the widened road between 545290 and 546290.

[4] At NY 54382910, about 100 yds north of the A66(T), according to Mr J. S. Slack, Brougham Castle Farm, in whose possession the stone remains. I thank him for allowing me to study it, and Mr R. P. Wright for discussing it with me. Mr T. Middlemass printed my photograph.

[5] *RIB* 254, 541, 891, 1109, 1351, 1817.

[6] *RIB* 953.

[7] V. Väänänen, Introduction au Latin Vulgaire (1963), 52. Cf. H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (1892-1916), III, 2, p. 835, and esp. no. 2344 (Lambaesis), *memorie eius posuit . . . aunculo.*

8 *JRS* 51, 1961, 193 (no. 6), 80 years 5 months; 58, 1968, 209 (no. 21), *annos LXX*[   ]. The total is 26 inscriptions, but 2 did not state the age of the deceased, 2 have lost the numeral, and 16 are too fragmentary to tell one way or the other.

9 In round figures, since many are fragmentary and some are hard to categorise, more than 250 tombstones have been published in *RIB*, *JRS* (from 1956), and *Britannia* (from 1970), on which it is clear whether or not age at death was stated. It is stated in about 85% of cases (over 220), but of these, only about an eighth give the age exact to the day, almost always of persons under 40 buried by parents or spouse; more than half give the age in years divisible by 5; cf. Hopkins (cited in n. 10), 253 n. 19, for comparable proportions elsewhere. *70 years: RIB* 9; 250 (*60*+); 554; 861; 1743. *72 years* (!): *RIB* 490. *75 years: RIB* 155; 266 (*70*+); 373; 533 (*70*+); *JRS* 58, 1968, 209 no. 21) (*70*+); *Britannia* 3, 1972, 352 (no. 3). *80 years: RIB* 161; 382; 517; 526. *80 years 5 months* (!): *JRS* 51, 1961, 193 (no. 6), from Brougham. *85 years: RIB* 93; 534 (*80*+). *90 years: RIB* 263; *JRS* 50, 1960, 236 (no. 5). *100 years: RIB* 363, same executor as *RIB* 373.

10 K. Hopkins, "On the Probable Age Structure of the Roman Population", *Population Studies* 20, 1966-67, 245.