

ART. VII.—A 4th-century milestone from Old Penrith.
By ERIC BIRLEY, F.S.A., President of the Society.

Read at Kendal, September 11th, 1958.

IN 1911 Haverfield contributed a note to these *Transactions* on a Roman inscription "now in the possession of Mrs Fell, at Knells, some three miles north-east of Carlisle" (CW2 xi 469 f.), adding: "Its history appears to be quite unknown, but it was doubtless found somewhere not very many miles away." In his supplement to CIL VII in *Ephemeris Epigraphica* IX (1913) it is given as no. 1256, at present the standard reference.

I have recently come across a sketch, with measurements appended, of what is unquestionably the same stone, in a notebook containing drawings and annotations upon them by Christopher Hodgson, the Carlisle architect, furnished by him to his brother John Hodgson, the Westmorland man best remembered as the historian of Northumberland. While he was working on what was to be the last volume of his *History of Northumberland* (Part II, volume iii, ultimately published in 1840), John Hodgson conceived the idea of including in it a full account of what he had come to the conclusion that he must call *Hadrian's Wall*,¹ and he evidently asked his brother to provide him with whatever information it might be practicable for him to secure, for incorporation in the Cumberland section of his work: collation of the notebook with John Hodgson's printed accounts of Roman Carlisle and of sites to the west of it (HN II iii 221-227) shows that he made full use of his brother's contributions, even including the "very curious font" in the possession of John Hodgson of Bowness and one at Drumburgh, both medieval. But his scheme, though it admitted a discussion of the Notitia stations of the list *per lineam*

¹ See my discussion of the evidence, AA4 xxxvi (1958) 34 ff.

Valli, and the outpost forts to north of the Wall, did not seem to require an account of the forts on the main lines of communication to the south (HN II iii 243); that evidently explains why he had no occasion to describe the Roman fort at Old Penrith, or to print the text of the inscription with which we are now concerned.



FIG. 1.—Tracing of Christopher Hodgson's sketch.

The notebook, with many other MSS. of John Hodgson's, came into the possession of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle in August 1926, with the J. G. Hodgson bequest, and it is now in one of the manuscript cases in the Black Gate Library, with the shelf-reference MS. 14, A 18: I came across it while looking for another item of interest to this Society, on which I hope to be able to make a report later on. Here I give a tracing of Christopher Hodgson's sketch, which is annotated as follows:

"Found at Old Penrith and now in the Possession of Geo. Blamire Esq^r of Carlisle, Castle street, 1834."

The dimensions tally so closely with those given by Haverfield, on information provided by Mrs Hesketh Hodgson and Mr L. E. Hope ("32 in. high, 17 in. wide . . . the front is occupied by a sunk panel 20 in. high by 14 wide"), that there is no room for doubt of its being the Knells stone — though it still remains to be learnt how it came to Knells from Castle Street, Carlisle, and to acquire the 17th-century sundial with which by 1911 it was crowned (CW2 xi 469).²

The text of the inscription is identical in its lettering and lineation with that recorded by Haverfield from Hope's rubbings and photograph, except that the last letter of the penultimate word is *e* and not *ae*:

bono / rei / publice / nato — set up to honour an emperor "born for the good of the State." As Haverfield observed, this is a common 4th-century formula: Dessau, in a note to ILS 748, observes that it is only found in that century (though he should have added, "or later", for ILS 827 shows it on a building-inscription of the Gothic king Theoderic, of the last quarter of the 5th century). Of the ten instances included in Dessau's selection, the earliest are of the time of Constantine the Great (ILS 697 and 712), but as one of those already abbreviates it to the initials *b. r. p. n.*, we may wonder whether it had not come into currency a little earlier, perhaps under Diocletian and his colleagues. Haverfield pointed out that the form of the stone — unlike the normal cylindrical milestone — is closely matched by the Diocletianic milestone from Old Wall (CIL VII 1190 = Lap. Sep. 450), the recorded text of which is: *imp. Diocletia/nus P. F. Aug. / semper seni*, with no indication by Bruce (who saw the stone, and communicated his reading to Huebner)

² Mr C. Roy Hudleston, F.S.A., who has kindly provided me with a note on George Blamire (d. 1863, aged 75), owner of large estates in Cumberland and Glamorganshire, a barrister of Lincoln's Inn and a noted eccentric, suggests that a search for his Will might perhaps be profitable: see also p. 92 f., below.

of anything more, but Bruce's woodcut suggests that one or two more lines may have been lost by flaking, and it might be suggested that *semper seni/or bono r. p. / natus* would fit the spacing and make a more satisfactory text.

In any case, however, there are a number of examples of milestones or pedestals for statues (as Haverfield was inclined to regard the Wroxeter stone, CIL VII 1166 = EE IX 1037) carrying the formula, more or less abbreviated, without anything else. In the Wall area we have two further instances, namely the milestone of which only the stump now remains on the north side of the Stanegate, a Roman mile west of that still standing by the Chainley Burn just east of Chesterholm (CIL VII 1187), and another which according to Hayton³ was found at Lanercost and thence came into Reginald Bainbrigg's collection at Appleby (CIL VII 1189, not seen since Hayton's day). The reason for omitting the name of the emperor is perhaps mere economy: in a period of short reigns, and when it had become standard practice that one of the first acts under a new emperor should be the methodical casting down of milestones bearing the name of his predecessor, and the setting up of new stones with the new one's name upon it, some officials must have appreciated that a great deal of time and trouble could be saved by cutting the new formula alone — which would apply to whatever emperor might subsequently reign in Rome or elsewhere.

An intermediate stage is ready to our hand in the famous milestone from Gallows Hill, now one of the greatest epigraphic treasures in Tullie House Museum (CW1 xiii 437 f., with plate facing p. 438, EE IX 1255); its original inscription has been erased completely, and one naming Carausius as emperor substituted for it; thereafter it was turned upside down, so that Carausius went underground, and a final inscription was cut, on what

³ Cf. Haverfield in CW2 xi 348: I. Hayton, an assistant master at Appleby Grammar School, compiled in 1722 a catalogue of the inscriptions from Bainbrigg's collection then preserved there.

was now its upper half, in honour of Constantius Chlorus, *nobilissimus Caesar*, who recovered Britain from Carausius's murderer and successor Allectus in A.D. 296 and thereafter remained in immediate control of Britain. The Birdoswald building-inscription, found in 1929 and now also in Tullie House, names Constantius and his co-Caesar after the two Augusti, Diocletian and Maximian; but milestones, particularly re-used ones, seldom offered space enough to record the names of as many as four rulers, and no doubt there would be no serious objection, in the first flush after the defeat of Allectus, to the name of the Caesar being cut on the Gallows Hill stone. But before long, as the Old Wall stone will serve to remind us, the authority of the senior Augustus was made manifest, even in the western half of the Empire, over which Diocletian had delegated general control to his co-Augustus, Maximian.

APPENDIX I.

Haverfield's paper on Old Penrith (CW2 xiii 176-198) listed 24 inscriptions found there, two-thirds of which, as I observed in my own paper on the site (CW2 xlvii 166-182) are no longer traceable; one of them, EE IX 1254, is another milestone, of the Gallic emperor Victorinus; this and the 4th-century stone presumably marked the same mile-position.⁴ In a recent volume of *Transactions* I have shown that EE IX 1226 too belongs to Old Penrith (and not to Netherby, whence it came to the Tullie House collection); in that case also it was not by excavation but by study of the early antiquaries that the attribution was made possible: I have no doubt that there are a good many more cases in which such study will bear fruit.⁵

APPENDIX II.

Mr Hudleston suggests that the link between Castle Street, Carlisle, and Knells was probably John Nanson, town clerk of Carlisle (d. 1891), who had his office in Castle Street — at no. 9

⁴ Cf. CW2 xlvii 177, citing Percival Ross's calculation of the position, CW2 xviii 220.

⁵ Cf. also my notes on an inscription from Carvoran, CW2 li 182 ff., and on the dedication to Belatucadrus from Carlisle, CW2 lviii 185 f.

in 1849, and later at no. 26; by 1873 he was living at Knells, which he sold before 1882 to the Rev. J. A. Fell, whose daughter-in-law was the owner in 1911, when Haverfield published the inscription; it seems not unreasonable to suppose that Nanson found the stone in one or other of the Castle Street houses, and took it to Knells when he bought the property. Mr Hudleston points out, incidentally, that Nanson was a member of our Society from 1879 until his death, at Ambleside, on 17 September 1891.