The milestones which are the basis of this paper have been discovered in the last forty years, but have not so far received full treatment in print. Both have a claim to significance, as they represent two of only three surviving inscriptions which mention the tribal group of the Carvetii in north-west England. The discovery of the milestone on Frenchfield Farm was noticed at the time in the Journal of Roman Studies, but the discovery of a new milestone in Langwathby parish makes it appropriate that both should be published and their significance assessed.

In the following paper, the first-named author discusses the Frenchfield milestone and the Greta Bridge-Carlisle milestones, and is responsible for the drawing and photography, whilst the Langwathby milestone is discussed by the second-named author. The paper is, however, a joint production in the sense that all matters as expressed are the result of consultation.

Milestone from Frenchfield Farm

Knowledge of the existence of a group of people in Roman Britain known, presumably to themselves as well as to others, as the Carvetii, was based between c.1600 and 1964 on a single funerary inscription. This was recorded by William Camden\(^1\) at the site now usually called, somewhat misleadingly, Old Penrith. Conventionally equated with VOREDA, this lies some five miles (8 km) north-north-west of the centre of modern Penrith.

In 1964 a second inscription mentioning the civitas (as the C preceding CARVETIOR(um) on Camden’s inscription is now usually expanded) was found on Frenchfield Farm,\(^2\) which lies near the village of Carleton in the outskirts of Penrith. This inscription consisted of a poorly-executed and careless statement of the names and titles of the rebel-emperor Postumus, the founder of the breakaway Imperium Galliarum (the independent Empire of the Gauls), followed by R(es)P(ublica) C(ivitatis) CAR(vetiorum), inscribed on the flat surface of a rough block of red sandstone, which is regarded as a milestone. Certainly its find-spot lay very close to the postulated line of a Roman road running from the fort at Brougham to join the line of the modern A6 somewhere to the north of Penrith,\(^3\) and some 300 yards beyond the crossing of the Eamont.

The lettering, executed with a pick, is so poor and the spelling so inaccurate – the mason rendered CASSIANIO LATINIO POSTVMO as CASIANIO LATINIANIO POSTIMO – that it cannot have been the product of any official or military mason’s yard. In this it contrasts markedly with the recently-recorded milestone of Severus Alexander from Langwathby (see below).

These three stones, then, constitute the evidence for the existence of the Carvetii, adding their name to those of several other groups whose precise relationship to the Brigantes, who are taken to be the predominant tribal grouping of northern England, is uncertain.
This type of relationship is very much subject to changing fashions in historical interpretation. It is generally accepted that the Brigantes were a tribe, whatever precisely that word may be taken to mean, and indeed a civitas, whose territory extended over most of northern England. It is, however, equally accepted that the name, which probably means something like “hill-dwellers”, was sometimes used carelessly or generally by Roman writers. It is further accepted that the use of certain criteria (e.g. dedications to Dea Brigantia) may suggest a wider geographical spread for what may be called, for convenience, Brigantia. However, group names form two main categories: names given to the groups by people outside the group, and names acknowledged inside the group and beyond. There are at least six names of groups of people which occur within the likely territory of the Brigantes, and whose relationship to the latter needs to be considered and, if possible, explained. These groups – and they include the Carvetii – are often thought of as having been in some sort of subordinate relationship to the Brigantes. Indeed, they are sometimes referred to as “sub-tribes” or, at others, drawing on the analogy of the Scottish clan system, as “septs”. However, we do not know exactly the nature of the relationship; but it does seem reasonable to suppose that, recorded on a personal memorial stone (as noted by Camden), it was expressing an important part of the dead person’s identity, one he would have claimed in his lifetime: he was a member of the Carvetii. How far this is true of the names of any of the other groups referred to above is a moot point as no similar evidence exists of such personal use.
With respect to the geographical spread of the territory of the *Carvetii*, again the use of different kinds of evidence yields different possible answers. We have seen that the three surviving inscriptions all occur within five miles of Penrith, and, taken alone, suggest a centre of gravity for the *civitas* in the middle Eden valley. Wider historical considerations, however, suggest Carlisle as the Romanised *civitas* capital, as do the deductions made half a century ago by Eric Birley relating to the mileage (LIII) on the milestone at Middleton in Lonsdale. This would assign to the *civitas* a territory of at least that length, one extending the length of the Eden valley and into Lonsdale. The paucity of evidence really means only that the various possibilities must be kept in mind against further discoveries, and that no great conclusions can be hung on so fragile a peg.

**A new milestone from Langwathby, Cumbria**

In 1993, the top portion of a Roman milestone, complete with its inscription, was unearthed on private land in the parish of Langwathby; the stone remains the property of the finders. It has been agreed that the find will be entered on the County’s *Sites and Monuments Record*, although in such a way, using the four-figure NGR NY 5430, as to protect the privacy of the owners.

![Fig. 1. The inscription on the Langwathby milestone (scale 1/4).](tcwaas_003_2005_vol5_0007)
The find consists of the upper half (or possibly third) of a nearly cylindrical milestone: it currently stands to a height of 850 mm, and is approximately 450 mm in diameter, although the inscribed face (500 mm by 450 mm) has been flattened. The milestone is cut from yellowish sandstone, not from the locally-occurring red sandstone, which is the material of the milestone from Frenchfield.

The inscription (Figure 1) consists of seven lines of text cut with a chisel; the letters are in capitals and of good, though not impeccable, quality; they do not appear to have suffered a great deal from weather-action. The stone has incurred some damage, not apparently in recent times; indeed, it appears that the inscription has been laid out in such a way as to avoid areas of the surface which were already damaged.

This section of the paper will consider first the inscription itself, and then the significance of the text and of the object’s find-spot for our understanding of the history of the Roman North-West.

The full reading of the inscription is as follows:

\[
\text{IMP(eratori) ▶ CAES(ari) ▶ M(arco) ▶ AVR(elio) ▶ SEV(ero) ▶ ALEXANDRO ▶ P(io) ▶ F(elici) ▶ AVG(usto) ▶ PONT(ifici) ▶ MAX(imo) ▶ TR(ibunicia) ▶ P(ostestate) ▶ II ▶ CO(n)S(uli) ▶ P(ro)CO(n)S(uli) ▶ P(atri) ▶ P(atriae) ▶ C(ivitas) ▶ CAR(vetiorum) ▶ LVG(uvalio) ▶ M(ilia) ▶ P(assuum) ▶ XVIII}\\]

For the Emperor, Caesar, Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander, Pious, Favoured by Fortune, Augustus, Chief Priest, in the Second Year of his Tribunician Power, Consul, Proconsul, Father of his Country, the Community of the Carvetii (set this up). From Carlisle Nineteen Miles.

The inscription can be dated to the year A.D. 223, and the form of its dedication follows closely that found on the Emperor’s aes coinage for the period A.D. 222-229. There is little that is unusual about the dedication and the Emperor’s titulature, except that many Emperors did not insist on the inclusion of any direct reference to their Imperium Proconsulare. As is usual on inscriptions of the early-third century, a considerable degree of ligaturing of letters occurs, involving some quite unusual forms – for example, $\text{X}$ (for -EX-, in line 2), $\text{XG}$ (for AVG, in line 3) and $\text{X}$ (for MAX, in line 4).

There are twenty-two triangular stops, one following each of the single letters or letter-groups which are word-abbreviations. The only groups without a succeeding stop are ALEXANDRO, the sole complete word in the inscription, and the final mileage figure of XVIII. The only doubt regarding the reading rests in the expression of the distance involved. It occurs on a portion of the stone that has sustained some damage; however, there is reason to believe not only that there is sufficient space to read “XVIII”, but also that there are clear residual indications of this reading.
The implications of this milestone are considerable. Although it has, of course, been known for some time that the Carvetii were organised by the authorities into a semi-autonomous civitas, little is understood about the timing of this, or about the nature of operation of the civitas or of its territorial extent. As we have seen, the milestones which are the subjects of this paper carry two of only three surviving inscriptions which mention the Civitas Carvetiorum, the other being the undated tombstone of one Flavius Martius, from Old Penrith. It was at one time thought that this man, who is described as a SEN(ator), belonged to a Cohors Carvetiorum. It is now clear, however, that the abbreviation, C CAR, should be read as Civitas Carvetiorum.

Thus, two of the surviving inscriptions are datable – the Frenchfield milestone to the reign of Postumus (A.D. 259-268) and the current milestone. This stone, therefore, brings the date of the civitas down by about forty years, making it likely that its inception constituted an element in the reforms of Septimius Severus during his period in Britain (A.D. 209-211) and should be seen as parallel in purpose to his encouragement of the cult of Dea Brigantia. Severus can thus be seen to have been as much concerned with strengthening the loyalty and organisation of civitates in the new province of Britannia Inferior as he was with military victory in the far north.

The present stone, which is one of only three milestones in the north attributed to Severus Alexander, is the only one to relate to a civilian authority and is unique amongst them in naming the place from which its distance had been measured. The
milestone from Middleton in Lonsdale\textsuperscript{16} shows a distance of 53 miles, but does not name the place from which its distance had been measured, though it can hardly be taken as anywhere other than Carlisle. The present stone, however, states clearly that its distance has been measured from LVG(ualium), which can safely be regarded as Carlisle.\textsuperscript{17}

It has for some time been assumed that Carlisle was made the civitas-capital of the Carvetii,\textsuperscript{18} the results of recent excavations\textsuperscript{19} in the City have added strength to that assumption, and have indicated that the later-second and early-third centuries represented a period of change in Carlisle. The present stone, however, by naming Carlisle (LVG) has put the matter beyond doubt, though it does not advance our knowledge of the extent of the territorium of the civitas. That it embraced land in the valley of the Eden and on the Solway Plain seems clear, and possibly down the river Lune also – as far, perhaps, as Middleton in Lonsdale, or even Lancaster.

In discussing the Middleton milestone, Eric Birley, having first mentioned the possibility of Carlisle having become a municipium without surviving record, then denied Collingwood’s suggestion of 1937, made in relation to that milestone, that the road south from Carlisle might have been maintained by “some local authority, perhaps the municipality at Carlisle”. In Birley’s opinion, such a municipality, even if it had had assigned to it “a territorium stretching some fifty miles and more to the south into a wild district which must surely have remained under military control”, would not have “maintain[ed] a strategic road in the most distant fringes of its territory”. Further, the inscriptions on the milestones recovered between Brougham and Carlisle were consistent with the idea that the road was a “normal” (i.e. militarily-maintained) road. He then made the suggestion that, in the initial stages of the Severan reorganisation of Britain, Carlisle may have become the provincial capital of a short-lived procuratorial frontier province of Lower Britain, garrisoned solely by auxiliaries, and in existence only from A.D. 197 until early in the sole reign of Caracalla, some time in A.D. 213. These dates, of course, are too early to have affected the Langwathby milestone, erected in A.D. 223, but the two milestones under consideration in this paper do appear to show that the Civitas Carvetiorum, wherever its civic centre may have lain, was responsible for the roads, in the vicinity of Penrith at least, at times in the third century.

What, then, is the significance of the new find for our understanding of the Roman road system in this part of Cumbria? That a road ran southwards from Carlisle, passing the fort at Old Penrith and on to the east of the fort at Brougham, is well known, as is also the fact that, somewhere in the vicinity of the confluence of the rivers Eamont and Eden, this road joined that coming over the Stainmore Pass.\textsuperscript{20} It has been generally assumed that a road swung east from the north-south route in the vicinity of Penrith, running through Carleton village to make a junction with the Stainmore route. The circumstances of the discovery of the new milestone show that, in principle, such an assumption was correct, but that in all probability the “linking road” diverged from the north-south route a little further to the north than had been supposed, and joined the Stainmore road somewhat further to the east. It would thus appear to have skirted round the north-east side of Carleton, passing through the site of Ninekirks, where many years ago a Roman coin hoard was recovered.\textsuperscript{21} Although maps show stretches of trackways that might relate to such a road, no lengths of such a Roman route have been positively identified. It would
appear, however, to make sense in the case of traffic which was passing between Carlisle and Catterick and York, but which had no business south of the river Eamont.

The Roman road system in the vicinity of Penrith: the new evidence

a. The Frenchfield Milestone

Margary states\textsuperscript{22} that his road 7e (Penrith (Brougham) – Carlisle) “continued upon the same alignment that had brought it to the east side of the fort at Brougham” and that, north of the Eamont, it ran “a little to the east of the present road [i.e. the A6] where it has been traced” [my italics]. Further, he states that “the line joins the old main road north of Penrith at the top of a hill”. This “old main road” is a minor road which continues southwards the line of the Carlisle-Penrith road from the roundabout at NGR NY 504 339. This minor road has been accepted as a continuation of the Roman line where the A6 deviates from the latter, but the nature of the road is against this. It is a typical medieval stock-track, the narrow carriageway
running between widely separated boundaries (actually walls) and changing from the 
east side to the west side and back from time to time. The overall alignment between 
the roundabout and Penrith also changes at about the midway stage in that stretch. 

Margary’s suggested line for the road between Brougham and the “old main 
road” is, however, given support by the milestone discovered at Frenchfield Farm in 
1964.23 The find-spot of this is glossed as “at Frenchfield on the N side of the River 
Eamont at Brougham”, which, strictly speaking, is inaccurate, since Brougham does 
not extend north of the Eamont. The civil parish of the find-spot is, in fact, Penrith, 
though Carleton might be a more helpful name. It seems apposite, in view of the 
newly discovered Langwathby milestone, to provide here a drawing (Fig. 2) of the 
Frenchfield inscription and to give a transcription slightly amended from that given 
in The Journal of Roman Studies. The stone reads as follows: IMP(eratori) 
CAES(ari) MA/R(co) CASSIANIO/LATINIANIO/POSTIMO/AVG(usto) PIO/ 
FELICI R(es)P(ublica) C(ivitatis)/CAR(vetiorum).

b. The Langwathby Milestone

It does not seem possible to associate the new milestone with Margary’s road 7e. 
There are, then, three possible explanations for its presence: (i) it has been moved; 
(ii) it was related to an east-west road approximately on the line of the present A686 
(Penrith-Alston) road; (iii) it was related to another road linking the trans-Pennine 
road (Margary 82, now the A66) with the north-south road.

The first possibility cannot be entirely discounted, but the distance given from 
LVG(uvalium) (Carlisle) – XVIII – shows that it cannot have been moved far. 

In the case of the second possibility, there seems to be no obvious reason for a 
Roman road on the general line of the A686. Not far east of the find-spot of the new 
milestone is the Eden crossing at Langwathby, and it seems highly improbable that 
there would have been two Roman crossings of the Eden as close together as the 
present A66 and A686 crossings. Besides, where would such a road have led? 
Whitley Castle, near Alston, was apparently adequately served by the Maiden Way 
north from Kirkby Thore.

What, then, of possibility (iii)? There was no necessity to go as far west as 
Brougham if the desired contacts were between, say, York and Carlisle via 
Stainmore, a route of some significance to judge from its appearance in both Iter II 
and Iter V of the Antonine Itinerary.24 In the context of the route here proposed as 
that on which the Langwathby milestone may have stood, it is interesting to observe 
that, while Iter V of the Itinerary includes Brougham (as Brocavo), Iter II has no 
intermediate station between Old Penrith (Voreda) and Kirkby Thore (Brovonacis). 
The Eden would have had to be crossed, the higher up its course the better, but the 
turn northwards might well be done as quickly as possible thereafter. This would 
involve, as did Margary’s road 7e, a crossing of the Eamont; but that is by no means 
as difficult a matter as crossing the Eden; and it is here that the find-spot of the new 
milestone comes into play.

To its south is a straight accommodation road leading southwards; projecting this 
line towards the A66 leads across the Eamont and past the church of St. Ninian, 
Brougham (Ninekirks). While this looks attractive on a map, the immediate problem 
that it presents is that there is a considerable drop, almost a cliff, down to the level
Fig. 3. Map of the Old Penrith/Brougham/St Ninian's Church area.
of Ninekirks, across the Eamont. Indeed, slightly further east there is a true cliff, in which are the well-known “Caves of Isis Parlis”. A short distance to the west, however, the cliff becomes a mere steep slope, and there is an oblique track down it, used today by tractors and the occasional car. The discovery, in or about 1914, of a hoard of 23 coins from the last quarter of the third century in the churchyard of St. Ninian’s adds some support to the possibility of a Roman road in the vicinity.

If the possibility of a road running north-westwards from the line of the A66, past Ninekirks to the find-spot of the new milestone, is accepted, it remains to connect this plausibly with the Carlisle road. It would be necessary to climb out of the Eamont valley, (cf. Margary’s “top of a hill”, quoted above in the discussion of the Frenchfield milestone) and an oblique track up the spur overlooking the find-spot would not be impossible. Once there, the postulated road would be on a col which connects Beacon Hill (937 feet), north of Penrith, with the high ground which separates the Eden valley from that of the Petteril (888 feet at NY 513 354) (See Fig. 3). The col rises to 578 feet at NY 539 331. Continuing north-westwards, the valley of a small tributary of the Petteril, unnamed on O.S. maps, but presumably (from the presence near it of farms called Greengill Head and Greengill Foot) called Greengill, would provide a very suitable route, joining the road north to Old Penrith and Carlisle very close to the roundabout referred to earlier (page 71). This roundabout is three (modern) miles south of Old Penrith.

**Roman milestones on the Carlisle-York road**

Reference to a map showing the known milestones of Roman Britain will show that that part of the York-Carlisle road between Greta Bridge and Carlisle (Margary 82 and 7e) has yielded milestones at a greater density than almost any other, with the exception of the Stanegate/Hadrian’s Wall area. While Sedgley recorded all of the then-known milestones in 1975, their depiction on the O.S. *Map of Roman Britain* is more difficult to correlate with published records. Details of the fourteen milestones involved are presented in the Table (p.75).

The suggestion is made above (p.69) that the milestone of the principate of Severus Alexander is related to the changes made in the administration of Roman Britain at the beginning of the third century, however far they had proceeded under Septimius Severus. It would be expected that one of the results of these changes would be a greater amount of contact between Carlisle and York thereafter, especially if the suggestion of the designation of Carlisle as the *civitas*-capital of the *Carvetii* at the beginning of the century is correct. That this greater contact between York and Carlisle is reflected in the recorded milestones seems to be the case. All of these, where datable, are from the third century or the beginning of the fourth.

There is, of course, no means of knowing whether or not the absence of milestones of the first, second and later-fourth centuries is indicative of less intense use of the road at those times or of a less lavish provision of milestones. While it is, however, virtually certain that so important a road was in existence throughout the period of Roman occupation, it is tempting to see in the density of third- and fourth-century milestones a reflection of greater use of the road in those periods.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>RIB No.</th>
<th>RIB Name</th>
<th>? on OSMapRB</th>
<th>? in OSMapRB list</th>
<th>Emperor/s</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Whereabouts</th>
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<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>2279</td>
<td>Greta Bridge</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Greta Bridge</td>
<td>Gallus &amp; Volusian</td>
<td>251–3</td>
<td>Rokeby</td>
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<td>2280</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>Vale House</td>
<td>Florian Probus</td>
<td>276-82</td>
<td>N. Yorks C.C. store</td>
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<td>2281</td>
<td>Spital (Vale House)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Vale House</td>
<td>Carus</td>
<td>282-3</td>
<td>N. Yorks C.C. store</td>
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<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>2282</td>
<td>Stainmore 5 miles W of Bowes</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Rey Cross</td>
<td>Carus</td>
<td>282-3</td>
<td>LOST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>2284</td>
<td>Hangingshaw</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Hangingshaw</td>
<td>Philip I &amp; II</td>
<td>244-46</td>
<td>Tullie House</td>
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<td>79</td>
<td>[uninscr.]</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Temple Sowerby</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>In situ</td>
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<td>–</td>
<td>Frenchfield</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Postumus</td>
<td>259-68</td>
<td>Brougham Castle</td>
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<td>2285</td>
<td>Brougham</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Constantine I</td>
<td>307-37</td>
<td>Helmsley Cas. (EH store)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Langwathby</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Severus Alexander</td>
<td>222-3</td>
<td>Private poss.</td>
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<td>2287</td>
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<td>Victorinus</td>
<td>269-71</td>
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<tr>
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<td>238-44</td>
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<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>2290-2</td>
<td>Gallows Hill</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Harraby Bdge</td>
<td>a) –</td>
<td>238-44</td>
<td>Tullie House</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTES**

The numbers in the left-hand column of the table are those assigned in Sedgley 1975.

φ Another milestone, which had lost its inscription, was found near Nos. 74 and 75, and is also in N. Yorks C.C. store. It accounts for the missing number 76 in Sedgley’s sequence.

* One symbol on the OS Map of Roman Britain covers both the milestones in 10 km square NY 44.

The missing numbers in the RIB sequence are accounted for by its somewhat original geographical order. They are 2283 (Old Carlisle) and 2286 (Middleton).
Acknowledgements

We both wish to express our gratitude to the authorities at Brougham Castle for providing access to the Frenchfield stone, and to the finders and owners of the Langwathby stone for providing access to and facilitating study of it. We are grateful, too, to Mr. Malcolm Ridley of Kirkby Thore for bringing the latter discovery to our attention. The fruits of discussion with our respective wives are also acknowledged.

Notes and References

8 Precisely, 10 December 222 to 9 December 223.
10 E.g. RIB 1279 from High Rochester, of the reign of Caracalla.
11 For parallels for these forms, the following may be consulted: RIB 1060 from South Shields for M (line 4); RIB 590 from Ribchester and 2299 from Vindolanda (also of the reign of Severus Alexander) for XCF (line 3). Although there are many parallels for the backward-facing E in ligatures, the form, X appears only in RIB 1238 from Risingham; nor is this a very satisfactory example, as what survives in that case is an eighteenth-century drawing of an inscription which is no longer extant and which, in any case, does not make proper sense as it stands.
13 RIB 933.
15 RIB 2299 (from Vindolanda) and 2306 (from Milecastle 42 of Hadrian’s Wall); both are of the same date as the present stone, but were erected under the authority of the provincial governor, Claudius Xenophon.
16 RIB 2283; see Eric Birley, op. cit.
17 See A. L. F. Rivet and C. Smith, The Place-names of Roman Britain (1979), 204, with full citations from, inter alia, Bede; the name also appears on ink-written tablets which have in recent years been excavated in Carlisle (R. S. O. Tomlin, “Roman Manuscripts from Carlisle: the Ink-written tablets”, Britannia 29 (1998), 31-84).
21 See D. C. A. Shotter, Roman Coins from North-West England (Lancaster, 1990), 181-182, for details and references.
22 I. D. Margary, op. cit.
24 The Antonine Itinerary is conveniently presented in The Place-names of Roman Britain (cited in n.17), the relevant portions at pp.157 and 162. The parts of the two routes with which we are concerned read as follows:

tcwaas_003_2005_vol5_0007
Iter II [N-S]  Luguvallo .............................................................. Carlisle
              Voreda  xiii m.p. (14 Roman miles actual distance) ............... Old Penrith
              Brovonacis xiii m.p. (14 " " " " ) ...................... Kirkby Thore
              Verteris  xiii m.p. (13 " " " " ) ......................... Brough

Iter V [S-N]  Verteris .............................................................. Brough
              Brocavo  xx m.p. (20 " " " " ) ....................... Brougham
              Luguvalio  xxi m.p. (21 " " " " ) ...................... Carlisle

It should be noted that the distance of 14 Roman miles given by Rivet and Smith as the actual distance from Old Penrith to Kirkby Thore is that via Brougham.

25 D. C. A. Shotter (1990), op. cit.