



Miscellanea.

ROMAN MEMORIAL FOUND NEAR THE WATLING STREET.

By W. J. WILLIAMS, M.A.

(See Plate XXIII).



ON March 21st, 1933, at a meeting of the Society, I reported my find on the same day a little more than a mile south of Chester of a large fragment of an inscribed slate slab commemorating a standard bearer of the Twentieth Legion who died about 100 A.D.

An allotment holder in digging a posthole had come across part of a small sandstone pillar and called me in to inspect it. On digging at the spot which he indicated a large slab of slate was found lying on a paved surface of sandstone and cobbles set in sand above the boulder clay. This pavement was later explored to east and west over a length of 20 yards and varied in width from 5 to 8 feet, and in thickness from 4 to 9 inches. The inscribed face of the slab lay downward at a depth of 18 inches, and on lifting it part of the face which had flaked off was left behind in small fragments. These were carefully recovered from the water and have now been replaced in their original positions on the stone. The allotment holder on seeing the well-cut letters pronounced the stone to be quite modern, and declared that our efforts had been wasted. It is to be feared that many of the best relics of antiquity are destroyed or reburied owing to a similar presumption that what is ancient is necessarily inferior. The extreme dimensions of the fragment are 2ft. 10½ins. by 2ft. 4¼ins., and the slab has a thickness of nearly 3ins. Apparently the slab had at some unknown date been

utilised to repair a hole in this minor roadway leading eastward from the Watling Street. The distance from the modern Eaton Road was 58 yards, so that it is hardly likely that the monument of which it formed a part had stood where it was found. Some letters had also been lost from the stone before it was placed there, as no trace of them was found among the fragments recovered. The cause of decay was most probably the penetration of moisture between the laminae to the depth of the deeply cut letters. The height of the letters diminishes from the top line downwards and varies from 4 to $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The quality of the lettering surpasses that on any of the numerous tombstones preserved in the Grosvenor Museum. This is the first sepulchral tablet found at Chester which is composed of material other than the local sandstone, and the beauty of the lettering is at least partly due to the superiority of the material. The fine lines above and below the letters, traced first to guide the mason's hand are still visible where the face has been preserved. The upper lines of the inscription are better preserved than the lower. If the slab was set back in a frame of sandstone, the lower lines would be more exposed to the weather than those above. The chamfered internal edges of the slab are consistent with such an arrangement. The inscription runs as follows, the small letters being conjectural :—

dis	m	ANB
..... e	STVS	
.....	G ▼ SIG	
nif. leg. xx.	V ▼ V ▼ STI	
pend	ANNOR	
.....	II ▼ C	

“ To the gods below : eSTUS, a standard-bearer in the Twentieth Legion, called Valeria Victrix, who served . . . years and lived . . . years, . . . ”

Of the final line only uncertain fragments of two or possibly three letters survive, divided by a stop. The general resemblance in style and arrangement to the tombstone in the Grosvenor Museum of another standard-bearer, Capienus

Urbicus, No. 68, in Haverfield's *Catalogue*, suggests that both stones are of about the same date and possibly the work of the same craftsman. This reads :—

DIS MANIBVS
D ▼ CAPIENI
VRBICI ▼ VOL
TINIA ▼ VIENN
SIGNIF LEG (?) STI
PEND XXIII
ANNOR ▼ XLIII
H ▼ F ▼ C.

“ To the gods below : Decimus Capienus Urbicus, of the Voltinian tribe, from Vienna, standard-bearer in the legion : he served 24 years, and lived 44 years. Erected by his heir.”

For purposes of registration Capienus Urbicus had been legally enrolled as a citizen of Vienna, the Roman *colonia* on the Rhone, a little south of Lyons in southern Gaul. Unfortunately in the case of our standard-bearer only the last letter —G— of this portion of the inscription survives.

The dating of the inscription is to some extent confirmed by Dr. Mortimer Wheeler's observation that the commandant's house at Segontium was built of Chester stone in the late first or early second century, ¹ when we know the Handbridge quarries were already at work. It appears possible to infer that the Roman ships, returning from Caernarvon to Deva, carried slabs of slate as cargo or ballast. Half a mile south of the present find, at Heronbridge, a considerable fragment of slate with a sawn edge was found by me under a cobble pavement of the early Roman occupation.

Mr. Frank H. Williams in his “ Synopsis of Roman Inscriptions at Chester ” ² records several instances of the use of slate in Deva ; two fragments of a large inscription found by him outside and south of the Kaleyards Postern in 1884 bear parts of letters apparently of an early date.

¹ *Excavations at Segontium*, 1922 : *Arch. Camb.*, LXXVII, p. 299.

² *Op. cit.* Footnotes pp. 58, 59, and No. 5 on p. 63.

STRAY FINDS.

COIN.

DENARIUS of Septimius Severus. Found in an allotment garden on the east side of Eaton Road, opposite Netherleigh House. Edge chipped.

Obv. T SEV PERT. Bust laureate right.

Rev. P M TR P III. Venu Victrix helmeted, holding sceptre and victory (195 A.D.).

AMPHORA STAMP.



On left side of handle, downward. Found when digging for a gas main at Parker's Buildings, Foregate Street, Chester.

W. J. W.

