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ON THE ROMAN ANTIQUITIES FROM THE NORTH OF
ENGLAND IN THE LIBRARIES OF TRINITY AND ST.
JOHN'S COLLEGES, CAMBRIDGE.¹

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To the student of the Roman Antiquities of the North of England, Cambridge has a peculiar attraction. Several altars and inscribed stones, derived from the region of the Roman Wall, are there preserved. The collection is not large, but it possesses great historic value. Nearly every stone sheds light upon the early annals of our country. Although much has already been written upon the subject of these stony documents, it may not be amiss to call the attention of the Institute to them, now that it has met within the bounds of the ancient borough of Cambridge. The inspection of them will be all the more interesting from the locality whence they were taken having been visited by the Institute two years ago.

In the year 1600, Camden and Sir Robert Cotton visited the Roman Wall. In consequence of the disturbed state of the district, and the "rank robbers thereabouts," they were unable to inspect the middle region of its track, where the most complete portions of it are to be found. They saw much, however, to reward them for their toils and brought away the altars which are now deposited at the foot of the staircase of Trinity College Library.

Before examining the inscriptions in detail, we may attend

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to some general facts which these altars press upon our notice.

The circumstance that these stones sculptured by Roman hands were brought from the most northerly part of England is impressive evidence of the extent of the Roman dominion. Who can look at them without being reminded of the words by which on one occasion the Romans are described in Holy Writ, "a nation from far, from the ends of the earth."

Some of the altars were found at Bremenium, the modern High Rochester, which is upwards of twenty miles north of the Wall, and some are from Habitancum, the modern Risingham, about twelve miles to the north of the Wall. Both these places are on the 'Watling Street. Here we have convincing evidence that the Romans when they drew their line of wall from the Tyne to the Solway, had no intention of relinquishing their hold of the country north of the barrier.

The character of the carving and letters on some of the altars shows they belong to the best periods of the empire ; others exhibit signs of the lowest age. In this we have proof of the enduring character of the Roman rule. In taking possession of the bleak and inhospitable solitudes of northern Northumberland, the Romans contemplated no ephemeral occupation, but one of the most lasting nature. We have many proofs that these northern stations were not evacuated until the final abandonment of Britain.

The altars in the vestibule of Trinity College Library have not much in their appearance that is attractive. They seldom arrest the step of a student ascending the staircase. Even this fact is instructive. The Romans in the north of England did not find themselves in circumstances calculated to foster the fine arts. They were engaged in war ; they had a bold and vigilant enemy to deal with ; all their circumspection and all their energy were required to strengthen their position and to preserve themselves from destruction. Articles of taste and luxury, such as are found in Roman villas in the south of England, are rarely met with in the camps of the north. The rude character of some of the altars in question is in keeping with this observation.

Another fact will strike the student, when giving these altars even a cursory examination. Two or three of them are reddened by fire. This is a circumstance of common occurrence. You can scarcely walk over the site of a sta-

tion without noticing fragments of stone artificially reddened. A careful examination of the stations proves that on two occasions, at least, they have been involved in ruin. The first occurred, probably, in the reign of Commodus, the last on the final withdrawment of the Romans. The Caledonians, on making a successful onslaught on the Roman lines, burnt whatever was combustible about the stations. To this cause the reddening of the altars is no doubt owing.

In the collection in Trinity College there are some mere fragments of altars. It is by no means unusual to find the sculptures in a Roman station broken in pieces. The exception is to find one entire. The injury is usually of such a nature as to prove that it was the result of design and of the application of considerable force. It may be, that the Romans and their allies on being converted to Christianity, destroyed their altars and their idols in testimony of their change of belief, but it is more likely that the work of demolition was effected by the Caledonians after the stations were abandoned by the Romans. These northern tribes seem to have taken a special delight in destroying everything that bore traces of Roman handiwork.

We may now examine the altars in detail, beginning with one which was taken from Bremenium, the most northerly station in England.

This is described by Camden at page 661 of the last original edition of the "Britannia." He thus interprets it—"Duplares Numeri exploratorum Bremenii Aram instituerunt Numini ejus (Caio) Cæpione Charitino Tribuno votum solverunt libentes merito."—The exploratory troops of Bremenium (receiving double rations) erected this altar to its divinity, Caius Cæpio Charitinus being tribune; freely and duly have they discharged a vow. Horsley (xcv. Northumberland) in commenting upon what he justly calls "that remarkable altar, with a curious inscription upon it, published by Mr. Camden," says, "The reading I have given of the body of the inscription is the same as his, which I take to be right ;



but nobody (that I know of) has given a satisfactory explanation of the D R S at the top. I think it plain that they are to be read *Deæ Romæ Sacrum*. That they made a goddess of Rome, and erected altars and temples to her, needs no proof to those who have any acquaintance with medals and other Roman antiquities."

Hodgson gives a different reading of the three initials, rendering them *De reditu suo*, and translating the whole inscription thus—"Caius Cæpio Charitinus being tribune, the duplares of the picket-guard stationed at Bremenium, freely and duly performing a vow on account of his safe return, set up this altar to his guardian god."—Hist. North. Part II., vol. i., p. 139.

No one acquainted with the wild region to the north of Bremenium can fail to recognise a sort of fitness in Hodgson's rendering. Charitinus and his troops might well congratulate themselves on their safe return from an exploratory expedition—the bogs, the forests passed, the wily enemy escaped. At the same time, Horsley's reading is less forced than Hodgson's. It is, moreover, usual to commence a dedication with the name of the god to whom the altar was erected.

That Rome was worshipped as a goddess there can be no doubt; and that she was held in very high estimation is apparent from the lines of Martial—

"Terrarum dea gentiumque Roma,
Cui par est nihil, et nihil secundum."—EPIG. XII. viii.

Words more lofty could not be applied to Jupiter himself. As the father of the gods is usually invoked on altars by the initial letters, I.O.M., there is no impropriety in this goddess being indicated in a similar manner by the letters, D.R.S.

The chief value, however, of the altar arises from the mention of Bremenium upon it. On the third line, the letters BREMEN. occur, and a stop is placed after them to indicate a contracted word. The first *Iter* in the Itinerary of Antoninus, is entitled, "A route from the limit, that is from the Wall, to Prætorium, 156 miles;" and the first place mentioned in it is Bremenium. Camden at once conjectured that the contracted word on this altar was Bremenii, and conceived that it furnished a strong probability that High Rochester was the starting point of the *Iter*.

The probability of the correctness of Camden's conclusion was increased by the discovery of another altar in the same station, two years ago, in the course of the excavations carried on there by direction of the Duke of Northumberland, on which the formula occurs, N. EXPLORATOR. BREM., *Numerus exploratorum Bremenii*.

The inscribed stones from Risingham next claim our attention. Amongst them is one which is remarkable, as giving the name of a local deity worshipped by the Romans, and fixing, with much probability, the ancient name of the station. Horsley, speaking of it, says, "I was pleased to see the whole inscription still so legible, and particularly the word *Habitanci* plain and distinct, though it is now above a hundred and twenty years since this and another altar, mentioned by Camden, were taken out of the river Rede, which runs near this station." Now that we have another period of above a hundred and twenty years to add to Horsley's, our satisfaction is proportionately increased in finding it in so satisfactory a state as it is. All authorities agree in reading the altar, "Deo Mogonti Cadenorum et numini Domini Nostri Augusti, Marcus Gaius Secundinus, beneficiarius consulis, Habitanci, prima statione, pro se et suis posuit."—To Mogon of the Cadeni and the deity of our lord Augustus, Marcus Gaius Secundinus a consular beneficiary at Habitancum, the first station (from the Wall), erected (this altar) for himself and his friends.

The god Mogon is no doubt the local deity of the Cadeni, who seem to have been a tribe located in the territory of the Vangiones. Mogontiacum, the modern Mayence, was the capital of the province of the Vangiones, and always contained a strong Roman garrison. There is something interesting in noticing the yearnings of soul in these Cadeni, banished to Risingham, after the gods of their native land.

Camden mentions a similar altar belonging to the same place, also erected by the Cadeni, bearing the inscription—



DEO MOUNO CAD[ENORUM]. For a number of years this altar was missing, having been used in the erection of a cowshed ; this structure being now pulled down, it lies in the middle of the station, but the inscription is barely legible.

The chief value of the altar arises from the mention of HABITANCUM. This, in the absence of any evidence of a conflicting character, warrants us in supposing that Habitancum was the Roman name of the station.

We next direct our attention to a slab derived from the same station, which is of a more ornate character than any other found in the region of the Roman Wall. It has been repeatedly engraved, but never so correctly as to supersede another attempt, which is here presented.

The slab consists of three compartments. The centre contains the inscription surrounded by a very elegant octagonal border. The inscription is, "NUMINIBUS AUGUSTORUM COHORS QUARTA GALLORUM EQUITATA FECIT."—To the deities of the emperors the fourth cavalry cohort of the Gauls erected this.

That the emperors were worshipped as gods admits of abundant proof, and that the more worthless an emperor was, the more slavishly he was adored is quite natural. The emperors here referred to are probably the two sons of Severus. Several inscriptions mentioning Caracalla and Geta have been recently discovered at this station. Among them is a slab found among the ruins of the south gateway, and now preserved in the museum at Newcastle ; it bears a strong resemblance to that which we are discussing. Upon it the name of Caracalla is given with all the usual epithets. The name of his brother has also been there, but is erased. This is uniformly the case with reference to the name of this emperor in Northumberland. It is interesting to notice the same thing in the arch of Severus at Rome. We here get a striking proof of the unity of the empire even in the time of Caracalla. An order of a comparatively trifling character issued in Rome was quickly obeyed in the remotest region of the earth.

The troops by whom this slab was raised were the fourth cohort of the Gallic cavalry. The Notitia places *the fourth cohort of the Gauls* in the station of Vindobala, the modern Chesterholm, where several inscriptions by this body have been found. The Vindobala cohort was a troop of foot, the



Sculptured Tablet found at Risingham, Northumberland.

PRESERVED AT THE LIBRARY, TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

cohort mentioned upon our slab was a mounted one. They are no doubt different bodies.

The principal portions of the side compartments of the Risingham slab are occupied with figures of Victory and Mars. Both appear as they are usually represented. Victory has wings, a laurel crown is in her right hand, a palm-branch in her left ; a globe placed beneath her feet indicates Rome's claims to universal empire. Mars appears fully armed ; his uplifted right hand grasps a spear, his left rests upon his shield ; his whole posture is a personification of the motto—

“ Ready, aye, ready for the field.”

Between the central compartment and these figures an ornament which is of frequent occurrence on Roman shields is introduced. It is probably the conventional form of a shield. It resembles the shield which is sometimes introduced into trophies, and is probably an ornamental adaptation of the shield of the earliest period of the Roman polity. Above the shield, on each side, are human heads ; that on the left side is triple-faced, it may be intended for Janus, the guardian deity of gates ; that on the right may be intended for Severus.

Beneath the shields are cords formed into a knot. Beneath the figure of Victory is a bird apparently a stork about to seize a fish ; near it is a small twig, apparently bearing a few berries of some description.

On the other side, below the figure of Mars is a bird, apparently a goose ; before it is set a small vase which seems to contain some fruit.

How far these minor objects are emblematic of the faith or the philosophy of the cohort of the Gauls, or how far they are the mere offspring of the taste of the sculptor, is not easy to decide. If the bird under Mars had been a cock, as has generally been stated, the appropriateness of its introduction would have been plain. We know that Rome was once saved *from* the Gauls by the cackling of geese. If the allusion is to this circumstance, it shows how entirely the Romans had succeeded in destroying the nationality of their conquered provinces, and in infusing the national spirit into the whole.

Another slab which was found in the same station, and was probably attached to a temple or other building, bears the inscription, COH[ORS] PRIMA VANG[IONUM] FECIT CURANTE JUL[IO] PAULO TRIBUNO.—The first cohort of the Vangiones

erected this under the command of Julius Paullus, the tribune.

The Vangiones, as has already been said, were a people of Belgic Gaul. As several inscribed stones found at Habitancum mention the Vangiones, it has been concluded that this station was chiefly garrisoned by them, though they are not named in the *Notitia Imperii*.



Below these two slabs in the wall of the lobby of Trinity Library is a large altar. It is reddened by fire, and is deeply scarred by the bad usage it has received; notwithstanding this its aspect gladdened the heart of Horsley. "This is a very stately altar," he says, "erected to the invincible Hercules. It yet remains at Conington very entire, and is, I think, one of the largest altars that I have seen, that are so beautiful." It reads "DEO INVICTO HERCULI SACR[UM] L[UCIUS] ÆMIL[IANUS] SALVANUS TRIB[UNUS] COH[ORTIS] PRIMÆ VANGI[ONUM] V[OTUM] S[OLVENS] L[IBENS] M[ERITO]. Sacred to the unconquerable god Hercules. Lucius Æmilianus Salvanus, tribune of the first cohort of the Vangiones, (erected this) willingly and deservedly, in discharge of a vow.

Personal prowess being a qualification of considerable importance to a soldier, Hercules was popular in the Roman army, and we find several altars dedicated to him.

The formula *vslm*, at the close of an inscription, is, with occasional variations, of common occurrence upon Roman altars. Whilst we deplore the folly of the idolatry of the Romans, we cannot but admire their readiness in acknowledging the obligations under which they supposed themselves to be laid by their gods.

In the mention of the Vangiones on this altar, as well as on the slab already noticed, we have an illustration of the Roman policy of prosecuting their conquests by means of tribes already subjugated. The Vangiones were stationed at Risingham, the Varduli and Lingones at High Rochester, and, along the line of the Wall, were troops of Spaniards,



Altar dedicated to Hercules. Found at Risingham.

PRESERVED AT THE LIBRARY, TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

Moors, Germans and others. The Britons themselves were drafted off in large numbers to the other ends of the earth, or perhaps to keep in order the very tribes and nations who were doing this service for their own countrymen. By this means a single legion of Roman troops were sufficient to hold in check the whole of North Britain. This, which was the sixth legion, was stationed at York, whence they could, from the nature of the country, on any alarm, expand themselves like a fan over the region to the north, or concentrate themselves on any position of the mural barrier which was exposed to danger.

One other inscription only from this station shall detain us ; it is on a monumental slab. It reads—D[IIS] M[ANIBUS] BLESCIUS DIOVICUS FILIÆ SUÆ VIXIT ANNUM UNUM ET DIE[S] VIGINTI UNUM.—Blescius Diovicus erects this to the divine manes of his daughter ; she lived one year and twenty-one days.

The bust in the triangular head of the stone is probably meant as a likeness of the deceased. The rude character of the carving, the peculiar shape of the letters, and the mode of spelling *vixit*, prove the inscription to be of late date.

There is something touching in all these Roman tombstones. The rudest and most meagre of them shadow forth the kindest affections of human nature. Blescius Diovicus, a wanderer, probably, from the banks of the Rhine, and inured to all the hardships and privations of war, had a heart that could bleed for his little daughter. In committing her dust to the urn, he was unwilling that the memory of her brief existence should perish hastily, and accordingly he carved, roughly enough, but probably according to his ability, the lines we have been examining. It is a pity he has not inserted the cognomen of the young lady, for, in that case, a



splendid immortality would have been hers. The name of the daughter of Blescius Diovicus would have been a household word with the learned sons of Trinity College, Cambridge.

We now turn from the stations north of the Wall to those of the Wall itself.

The *Notitia Imperii* gives the stations along the line of the Roman Wall, and mentions the troops and the prefects which were stationed in each. At Condercum, the fourth station on the line, reckoning from the eastern extremity, it places the prefect of the first Ala of the Astures. At Benwell several slabs and altars have been found inscribed by this body of soldiers. Proceeding westwards, we meet with a Roman station at Rutchester. The *Notitia* gives us as the camp next in order to Condercum, Vindolana, where the first cohort of the Frixagi were stationed; here, unhappily, no stone has been found mentioning this cohort or any other. Going still further westward we meet with a station near Halton Castle. Next in order to Vindolana the *Notitia* gives us the camp of Hunnum with the Savinian ala for its garrison. The only stone naming this troop found at Halton or elsewhere in England is the broken fragment preserved at Cambridge and here represented. Fragmentary as it is, it is sufficient to prove Halton Chesters to be the Hunnum of the *Notitia*, especially as there is abundant evidence for establishing the station next in order to be the Cilurnum of the *Notitia*. This inscription is apparently a monumental



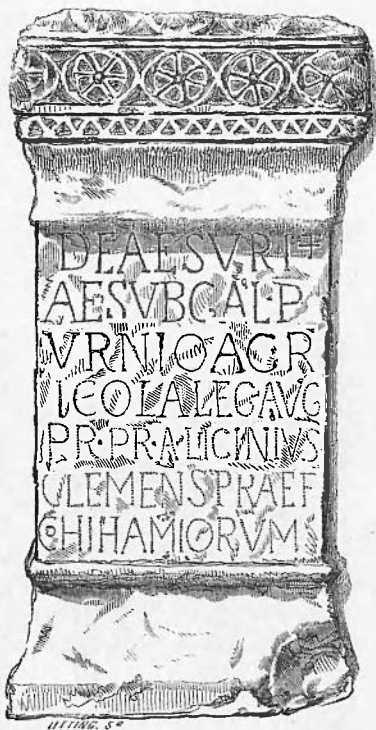
one erected by Messorius Magnus to the manes of his brother. The reference to the Ala Sabiniana is however distinct, and is sufficient to establish for this battered and ill-used stone an historic value. Several ligatures or tied letters will be noticed in it. For example, the three letters TER in *Frater* are all combined in one

form. A peculiarity in the writing of the word ALAE is worthy of notice. The second A which is adjoined to the letter E is represented upside down. In Saxon inscriptions

Roman letters are not unfrequently inverted ; this does not often occur in those carved by Latin hands.

At Carvoran the Roman Magna, the eleventh station on the Wall, the Syrian goddess seems to have been extensively worshipped. An altar derived from this quarter is preserved in the collection at Trinity College. The upper portion of it is elaborately carved, and the first and second lines of the inscription, and part of that of the third are complete ; but all the subsequent lines, amounting to four, have been lost through the exfoliation of the stone. Fortunately Camden had copied the inscription before this destructive process had

taken place, and the figure here given has the missing lines supplied chiefly from his copy. I have ventured to render the last line more complete than he has done, for the discovery of several other inscriptions at this place of late renders it quite certain that the first cohort of the Hamii, not the fourth cohort of the Gauls (as Horsley supposed), were the dedicators of the altar. The inscription reads *Deæ Suriæ sub Calpurnio Agricola legato augustali proprætore Aulus Licinius Clemens præfectus cohortis primæ Hamiorum*. To the Syrian goddess Aulus Licinius Clemens prefect of the first cohort of the Hamii under Calpurnius Agricola, Augustan legate and proprætor. The Hamii were natives



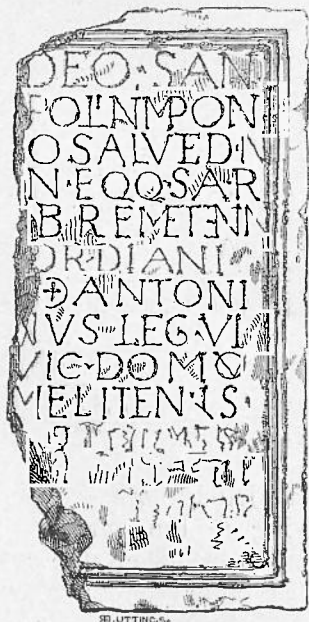
of Syria. The Syrians were much addicted to the worship of Cybele. There is at present lying in the garden at Carvoran a fragment of a stone which bears all the appearance of having formed part of an altar similar to this one ; at all events the name of Calpurnius Agricola is distinct.

To one other altar only will we direct attention. Though

not from the region of the Wall it still belongs to the north of England. It is without doubt the most elaborately carved altar which the Romans resident in Britain have left us. It is now preserved in the quadrangle of St. John's College. Camden mentions it, and tells us it was found in the Roman station of Ribchester. The inscription, which he informs us "was copied for him," he gives as follows:—

SEO ESAM
 ROLNASON
 OSALVEDN
 AL. Q. Q. SAR
 BREVENM
 BEDIANIS
 ANTON I
 VS MEC. VI.
 IC DOMV
 ELITER

Never, perhaps, was so unmeaning a concatenation of letters submitted to the gaze of a bewildered antiquary. Camden could make nothing of the inscription, but suggests somewhat waggishly that it contained little more than the *British* names of places adjoining. Horsley grappled with Camden's corrupted copy, and elicited one portion of truth. He says, "I believe the fourth line may be *Alæ equitum Sarma* [tarum]."



The altar seems soon after its discovery to have been used as a common building-stone in the erection of Salisbury Hall. In 1815 it was disinterred, and fell into the hands of Dr. Whitaker, who bequeathed it to St. John's College. Dr. Whitaker (*History of Richmondshire*, vol.

ii. p. 461) thus expands the inscription: *Deo sancto Apollini Apono ob salutem Domini nostri ala equitum Sarmatarum*

Breneten. sub Dianio Antonino centurione legionis sextæ victricis. The correctness of this reading, in the main, cannot be disputed, but one or two emendations may be suggested. Instead of Apono, which Dr. Whitaker conceives to be an epithet of Apollo, Mapono is probably the true reading. We nowhere else meet with Aponus (indolent) as an epithet of this deity. At Plumpton, in Cumberland, an altar has been found which is inscribed¹—

DEO

MAPONO

ET N.AVG

To Mr. Roach Smith I am indebted for the reading now suggested, as well as for the idea that Maponus may be the British name of Apollo, as Belatucader is of Mars. It is nothing uncommon to address a god both by his classical and local name. The first letter in the fourth line appears to be *N* (*numerus*) rather than *A* (*ala*) ; both designations as applied to a troop of cavalry are common. The last letter on the ninth line is worthy of notice. The sculptor seems in the first instance to have made the word *domu* and then to have altered it to the usual form of *domo*.

The chief value of the inscription depends upon the fifth line. Mr. Hodgson Hinde, in a paper read before the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and published in their Transactions,² conjectured (without having seen the altar) that Dr. Whitaker's reading of Breneten, should be Bremeten. Such, as is shown in the woodcut, appears to be the fact. He further argues that the station at which the Sarmatian cavalry (Ribchester) were located, was the Bremeten racum of the Notitia. He does so upon the same principle that High Rochester is conceded to be Bremenium, and Risingham Habitancum.

The emperor, for whose welfare this altar was erected, does not appear, but judging from the excellence of the design of the altar and from the clearness of its lettering, he must have been one of the earlier series.

Besides the inscription, the altar is sculptured on two of its sides. The subject of one of these carvings is the youthful Apollo resting upon his lyre. The figure, notwithstanding the hard usage it has met with in the course of centuries,

¹ Lyson's Cumberland. p. clv.

² Archæologia Æliana, vol. iv. p. 109.

exhibits considerable grace. Two females, the one fully draped, the other only partially so, are shown on the other side of the altar. They hold some object between them which is so much injured as to be undistinguishable ; it may have been a basket of fruit or an offering of flowers. Dr. Whitaker is surely wrong in describing these figures as two priests holding in their hands the head of a victim.



Such are some of the objects of antiquity connected with the domination of Rome in the north of England, that are at present to be met with within the precincts of the University of Cambridge. However rude the carving of some of them, they will ever be interesting to Englishmen, as indicating the progress of their forefathers from a state of barbarism into one of high civilisation.

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