

ON THE ROMAN STATIONS "BURRIUM," "GOBANNIUM,"
AND "BLESTIUM," OF THE TWELFTH & THIRTEENTH
ITERS OF ANTONINUS,

BY W. THOMPSON WATKIN.

So little has hitherto been either known or written of the above-mentioned stations, that it seems highly desirable to put on record in a succinct form all the evidence in the shape of discoveries of Roman remains (and the comments thereon by various authors) which have taken place in the neighbourhood of their sites. The chief discoveries seem altogether unrecorded in any archæological work, although their importance in identifying the sites is great.

In Iter XII of Antoninus we find the two first named stations placed on the route from *Isca* (Caerleon) to *Magna* (Kenchester), thus—

Ab <i>Isca</i> .	Mil Pas.	
<i>Burrio</i> .	Novem.	9.
<i>Magnis</i> .	Viginti et duo.	22.
<i>Gobannio</i> .	Duodecim.	12.

In the thirteenth Iter, which runs from *Isca* to *Calleva* (Silchester in Hampshire), we find *Blestium* mentioned, thus—

Ab <i>Isca</i> .	Mil Pas.	
<i>Burrio</i> .	Novem.	9.
<i>Blestio</i> .	Undecim.	11.
<i>Ariconio</i> .	Undecim.	11.
<i>Glevo</i> .	Quindecim.	15.

The stations *Glevum* and *Ariconium* have been identified as Gloucester and Bury Hill near Weston under Penyard, respectively, so that it seems certain that *Blestium* was situated somewhere on the Gloucestershire side of the county of Monmouth, but the question of its actual site I will leave until I have treated of the stations in the twelfth Iter.

The celebrated Horsley was, I believe, the first antiquary who placed the Roman *Burrium* at the present town of Usk (*Brit. Rom.*, pp. 320 and 465). The distance from Caerleon, and the track of the Roman road, seem strong evidence in favour of his decision. He says of Usk (p. 320)—“The situation and shape of this latter town, lying in squares, together with some coins found there, favour its having been a Roman station, though at present there are no remains of it,” &c. The coins he names are the first discovery of the Roman period recorded to have been made at Usk. Seventy years afterwards Coxe in his *Monmouthshire* (pub. 1801) says of the town (p. 125)—“In digging wells and making foundations for buildings three ranges of pavement have been discovered, and in the adjacent fields pitched roads traced, which are supposed to have been streets of the town.” In a note to this paragraph he adds—“In a field called *Cae Puta*, to the south of the town, beneath the church and the turnpike road, about five years ago, a paved road was discovered under ground; it was nine feet broad, and formed of hewn stones set edgewise.” On the same page he also says—“A lane called Book lane was pointed out to me as having been a street of the (ancient) town.” Britton and Brayley, in the *Beauties of England and Wales* (vol. xi, p. 144), add to the above account that the road found in *Cae Puta* “was probably part of the old road which extended from *Burrium* to *Venta Silurum*.” In this case it would lead nearly north and south. They also add—“Many ancient houses are in ruins, and of some only the foundations remain.” These remains of houses, I think, were undoubtedly (judging from recent discoveries) of the Roman period. In the same work it is also inferred that the castle (or rather its outer bailey) had been the Roman *castrum*, for after the statement that its origin was unknown, it is added, “though from some of its architectural features it was of Roman or Roman-British origin.” Then it is remarked that the remotest notice of it found is that it belonged to Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, in the reign of Henry III. The outer bailey “is surrounded by straight walls, flanked with round and square towers destitute of windows, but having occasional narrow aper-

tures." There are no doubt instances of a Roman *castrum* serving as the "outer bailey" of a mediæval castle, as at Pevensey and Porchester; ; but in the present instance, as far as I can judge, there appears to be no sign of Roman work in the architecture of the castle. I will, however, leave this for others to decide.

This field, called *Cae Puta* (or *Putta*), is due south of the present town of Usk, and is bounded on its southern side by a small brook, the lane named by Coxe as "Book Lane," but which in old deeds is called "Puck Lane" (pronounced in the neighbourhood as "Pook"), until lately formed its northern boundary. In the year 1842 this field became the property of the county of Monmouth, and a gaol was built in or about its centre. During the excavations necessary for its erection numerous Roman remains were brought to light, but unfortunately no record of them has been preserved. From the verbal evidence of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, however, it appears that two roads, one running almost north and south, were come upon,¹ with the foundations of numerous buildings, which latter were immediately destroyed. A great number of coins, fibulæ, &c., were also found, but (with the few exceptions named hereafter) were dispersed and lost. The only public notice taken of them at the time was the following paragraph in the *Archæologia Cambrensis*, vol. i, p. 188:—"A discovery of a considerable quantity of Roman pottery, bricks, &c., and of some coins, has lately been made at Usk, in digging for the foundations of the new gaol." A few articles only have been preserved, and are now in the Museum at Caerleon. They consist of a *mortarium* 14 inches by 5½ inches, inscribed on each side of the spout ALBINI, a portion of a "pillar moulded" glass of greenish hue, a fragment of deep blue glass speckled with white, a most beautiful enamelled fibula or stud; a first brass coin of Domitian *Rev.* VIRTVS. AVGVSTI; and two third brass coins of Gallienus, *Rev.* VBERITAS. AVG.

Mr. Lee, in his *Isca Silurum* p. 55, describes also several very beautiful coloured glass beads, found in the

¹ It is said that these roads were found at a depth of two feet only, but this is questionable.

garden of Iltyd Nicholl, Esq., near the river. Some years later when a new wing was added to the gaol, a Roman paved street was also come upon, but nothing has been recorded as to its dimensions or exact direction.¹

But in the year 1876, it was decided to erect a new Court House, adjoining the gaol on the north side. To do this, as the remainder of the original field, *Cae Putta*, was not sufficient in size, it was necessary to include not only a portion of Book Lane, but of a field on the other side of it, called by Coxe the "Priory Orchard," but now a meadow. The course of Book Lane had accordingly to be diverted further northwards. This will be best explained by the accompanying plan. Possibly as little might have transpired concerning any antiquarian discoveries made on the occasion, as in the previous instances, had it not been for the clerk of the works, Mr. James M. Lucas, who took much interest in the matter. During the excavations necessary for the southern walls of the building, and also in digging a water tank, Mr. Lucas informed me that the workmen came upon a regular pitched road running north and south, with another crossing it from (as he thought) E.N.E. to W.S.W., but the direction of this latter has since been found somewhat different, as will be explained hereafter. The road running north and south, as marked in the plan, was traced southwards to the wall of the gaol. These roads were laid bare at the point of their intersection, and were there in a most perfect state. Like those at Pompeii they had raised *trottoirs* or footpaths at the sides. The width of the central roadway was nine feet, and it was pitched with blocks of limestone extending fifteen inches into the ground. Each stone appeared to have been hammer dressed, and measured at the surface of the roadway five inches by two inches. The *trottoirs* were three feet six inches in width, with kerbstones, and were paved with small rough stone cubes. Some of these cubes, and one of the kerbstones, are (or were) in Mr. Lucas's possession. These roads were the only portions of the discoveries which attracted much notice, but it is known that in levelling the ground in front of the Court

¹ From the position of the wing of the gaol, this road must of necessity have been east of the one running north and south found in 1876.

House, at the point marked *j* in the plan, considerable portions of walls were found, only, however, to be immediately destroyed. Amongst the miscellaneous remains found were several querns or hand mills, and a quantity of bones of animals. In connection with this it may also be stated that bones of the wild boar were met with, considerably above the Roman level. A shilling of James I was likewise discovered near the surface.

But the most interesting discovery made on this occasion was that of a fragment of an inscribed Roman tombstone. Though much shattered and worn, enough remains to identify it as commemorating the child of a soldier of the Second Legion, who lived three years and some months. The letters (some of them puzzling) are—

* . AN . III
INQVE
CVD . F . *
* II . AVG . F . C *
* M . FIL . F . M

The asterisks mark obliterated and unintelligible letters, the upper part of the stone containing the name of the deceased is lost. The commencement of what is left has been VIX. (for VIXIT, part of the X being visible) AN. III. In the second line there has been either *Menses* (or *Dies*) (*q*)*uinque*. The third line, as it stands, is puzzling. It looks as if it contained in an abbreviated form the name of the father of the child, but if so it is not in its normal position. It is followed by *Miles Leg(ionis)* II. AVG, or if not *Miles*, the title of some officer of the legion is named. The letters after this I took to be F. CVR (in the fourth line), followed by AVIT (in a ligulate form) FIL. B.M., but all who have seen the stone agree that the letters are as above. At the end of the fourth line after c there seems to be a letter like R or P, which is much larger than the others in the line. As it stands, the lettering between AVG and FIL is at present unintelligible, but for the remainder I suggest *Filio Fecit Monumentum*.

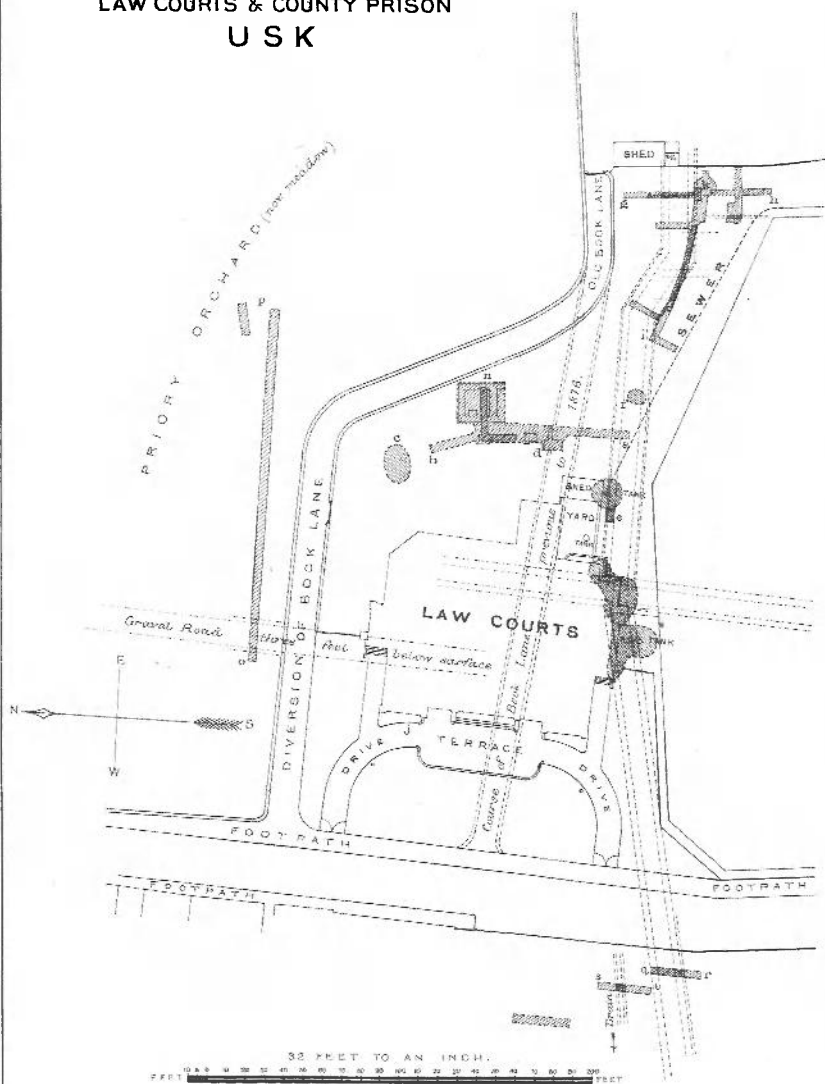
I am indebted to Lieut.-Col. Milman (governor of the gaol), in whose possession the stone now is, for a squeeze of the inscription, and to A. D. Berrington, Esq., Pant-y-Goitre, for a rubbing of the same. In its present state the stone measures thirteen inches by ten.

During these excavations some seventy to eighty Roman coins were found, but they were dispersed amongst the workmen and lost. Two were recovered by Mr. Berrington and sent to me for inspection. They were both of the first brass series of Trajan; on one the reverse was totally obliterated; the reverse of the other was ARMENIA ET MESOPOTAMIA IN POTESTATEM P.R. REDACTAE. A few more of the coins found in these excavations were recovered by Mr. O. Morgan, but I have not yet been able to see them.

Very fortunately, after hearing of these discoveries, I made enquiries of, amongst others, Mr. A. D. Berrington of Pant-y-Goitre. This gentleman, who is a most diligent antiquary, happened to be abroad at the time the Court House was erected, but upon my corresponding with him on the subject of the remains found, he at once proposed, at his own expense, to make excavations in the fields, &c. surrounding both the Gaol and Court House, and to him I am indebted for the whole of the following information. Mr. Berrington's course of action cannot be too highly praised, and were the same zeal shewn by others, who have the opportunity of excavating on the site of Roman stations in various parts of the kingdom, our knowledge of the topography and history of Roman-Britain would be vastly increased.

Having obtained the consent of the Visiting Justices, Mr. Berrington, on the 27th of December last, set four men to work in the garden behind the Court House, to the east of it. The first operation was to open a trench at the point marked *a*, which was continued northward. It was hoped by this means that the road reported by Mr. Lucas as running E.N.E. to S.S.W. would be struck upon. At the depth of six feet a layer of broken pottery, with some fragments of lead and a few animals' bones, were found. Under this was a layer of alluvial sand, under this gravel, also deposited by the river. This had brought the workmen to a depth of ten feet from the surface, including two feet of recent filling, still they had not found the anticipated roadway; but in the layer of sand which had been cut through various Roman remains had been found. The layer of pottery which was upon the top of the sand embraced some fine pieces of Samian

PLAN OF LAND
SURROUNDING
LAW COURTS & COUNTY PRISON
USK



The excavations at the building of the Court House.
In 1876 mapped by Mr Lucas.
Mr Berringtons, excavations 1878.

ware, one embossed with an eagle and leaf pattern, another with a dancing goat and birds, others had a pattern composed entirely of leaves, various pieces of coarse red pottery, and the handle of an amphora bearing in relief the letters MCSR, and roughly graven above them was the mark I.III. Then in the upper part of the sand layer were more fragments of both plain and figured Samian ware, portions of black ware and amphoræ of yellow moulded ware (one with a rosette in relief), black ware with an elaborate pattern, and one piece with a fine metallic glaze. A number of the fragments bore the potters' names. Some few fragments of tile were also found, one portion of a curved tile being inscribed LEG.II., —the remainder (AVG) having been broken off. The layer of sand was about three feet thick, and between one third and one half way down in it there was a layer of burnt wood. The remains continued down to the surface of the gravel, portions of Samian and other pottery being found in the surface of the latter. About the middle of the sand layer a good flint knife was found, the handle of a bronze instrument like a small spoon, three large-headed iron nails, some pieces of thin white and thin blue glass, the bottom rim of a white glass bowl, and several lumps of some black gum or resin (this latter will be noticed hereafter). This trench, which was dug for the length of twenty-two yards, intersected the former course of Book Lane, but the above named were the only results it yielded.

Having thus failed to come upon the track of the road running E., Mr. Berrington for the time suspended operations upon the line of this trench, and sank a trial pit at *f*. Although this must have come upon the centre of the road, the latter was not found, though at eighteen inches beneath the surface there was a concrete floor, but this was no doubt of a later period. Another pit sunk at *e* had a better result, the road being found, but as the pit was formed between some of the recently made drains it could not be extended. It was, however, proved that, as had been suspected, Mr. Lucas had measured the angle of the eastern road erroneously. Instead of crossing the road running N. and S. diagonally, this eastern road falls upon it at

right angles. Mr. Lucas was, however, right in asserting that the road on the other side of that running N. and S. ran in a west-south-west direction. It appears that only this latter was uncovered in 1876 far enough to ascertain its course, whilst of the easterly road only enough was seen to ascertain that from the point of intersection there was a road on that side. (In the trench subsequently sunk at *g h* the western road was also found, but more of this anon). At the point marked *c* a pit had been sunk in 1876 during the building of the court house, but no trace of buildings had been found. It was determined to lengthen the trench commenced at *a* in the direction of this pit, and the result was the discovery of apparently two rooms of a Roman building of late age marked *n* on the plan. The northernmost of these two rooms was 14 ft. by 8 ft. 6 in.; the southern one was 14 ft. from E. to W., but was only uncovered for 6 ft. in a southern direction. The remains of these walls were built on (or nearly so) the top of the layer of sand, here five feet thick; but there was an older wall, shaded on the plan, which intersected the northern room and went down to the gravel layer. To the west of this room it turned at a right angle in a southerly direction. The later walls had been built into connection with it, and the whole appeared to have formed but one building.

This earlier wall was twenty-eight feet long on its E. and W. side, and nineteen feet in the portion running N. and S. The whole of these walls were three feet in thickness, and had apparently been all reduced to the same level, at the same time, remaining at about a uniform level of four feet above the road at *e*. The older wall was seven feet in height from its foundation, and nothing more could be traced of it than what is marked on the plan. Beyond its southern extremity there was at *d* a confused mass of foundations, great quantities of broken stones at the level of the present tops of these walls, as if the smaller ones had been rejected, and the larger taken away for building elsewhere. The older wall stood true square, with a fairly even face, and was exclusively of quarried stones, the mortar, which had contained pounded brick, was utterly reduced to sand. That this wall had been built on the gravel, before the deposit of river sand

—in which so many of the Roman remains have been found—was formed, seems certain, from the fact that the sand was silted into the joints. The later walls, where built of quarry stones, were constructed in much the same manner as the older one, but more roughly, and in most of them rounded river stones were worked in. The mortar, where recognisable, contained pounded brick and small pebbles, but very little of it was found, though in its scanty remains were brought to light two coins, one of which was a second brass of Vespasian, the reverse obliterated; the other was illegible. No traces of floors were found in these ruins, and no doorway in the northern one; possibly there may have been a doorway in the unexcavated part of the southern one. From the centre of the north wall of the northern room a large flat foundation stone projected into the interior of the room. Under it was found (in fragments) a vessel of pale red pottery (ribbed all round) of this shape.



There was also in this room a projection from the western wall, as marked in the plan, which seemed to be a hearth. Nothing likely to have been in this vessel, such as bones, ashes, &c. were found. Near it was a piece of bronze with two rivets in it, and a little above an illegible third brass coin. A pit had, at some previous time, been sunk in each of these rooms, and the earth, which had been filled in again, was mixed with the black surface earth. A good deal of Roman pottery in large fragments, better preserved than usual, had been filled in with it. A bronze hair-pin, a red cornelian pebble, rubbed flat on two opposite sides, and some fragments of glass and flint were also found in these rooms, but as they did not seem promising they were filled up, as was the whole of this trench, which towards *b* yielded nothing of the Roman period.

Mr. Berrington then ordered a trench, *o p*, to be cut in an E. and W. direction on the other side of the new course of Book Lane, in the Priory Orchard (permission to dig here having been kindly and readily given by Mr. Watkins the owner and Mr. Edmunds the tenant) with the view of intersecting the N. and S. road. It had

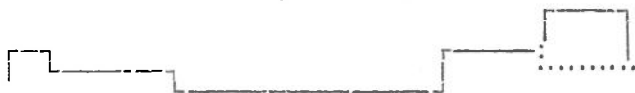
been noticed that in summer the grass was "burnt" in this field in a line across it, corresponding almost with that which the Roman road should have taken. The usual depth at which these paved roads had been previously found was about an average of six feet six inches; but instead of finding the road as he had anticipated, Mr. Berrington uncovered a hard gravel road, at three feet from the surface, with the foundations of a wall on each side of it. Two pieces of Samian ware were found lying on its surface, and a much corroded iron instrument. Mr. Berrington considers this road mediæval, but the question arises, is it not late Roman, raised to the height at which it was found, to escape the inundations of the river, by which its predecessor may have been destroyed. In the whole of this long trench, only one defaced brass coin, a bronze fibula, two boxes of fragments of pottery, a piece of lead and a flint splinter were found. Considering that he had got too far to the north, and away from the station, Mr. Berrington at once had this trench filled up.

A trench *g r* was then dug in a market garden, on the west side of the turnpike road, and here the Roman road running westwards (or rather w.s.w.) was come upon at the usual level, in exactly the position to which it appeared to point from the junction of the roads. The pitching from the centre and northern footpath had gone, but the southern foot-path was perfect. Another small trench, *s t*, revealed a well built Roman drain, without any covering stones, built of the same stone and in precisely the same manner, as the kerb wall of the Roman road, and at precisely the same depth. It was running westwards toward the river.

The trench, *g h*, was next dug in the extreme east of the *Cae Putta* field. Here the road running eastwards was again found. The pitching had been removed, but the layer of burnt clay, on which the stones rested, remained, and a plain bronze finger-ring was found on the surface. All of these roads had a dwarf stone wall, like a curb, at the outside from twelve to fourteen inches high, and about ten inches thick. Then came the footpath, three feet six inches wide, then the roadway, eighteen inches lower and nine feet wide. In the case of

the eastern road, as found in the trench *gh*, the southern footpath was, at this point *k*, higher than the northern one, and the top of the wall at the side was eight inches higher still, the footpaths were in good condition, but not so deeply pitched as the roadway had been. It ended abruptly westwards. Mr. Berrington afterwards ascertained from an old man resident at Usk, that about forty years ago he helped to break up this road, and its non-appearance in the excavation at *f* was thus fully accounted for. The pitching stones were carted to mend the modern road some little distance from Usk, and the larger stones found were used to build a wall in Usk by the side of the road leading to the castle.

Further excavation showed that instead of this higher level at *k* being a curb, it was a detached block of masonry five feet in length (parallel to the road), and three feet in width. The annexed diagram will shew the appearance of a section of the roadway at this point.



It was at first thought that this might be a portion of the pier of a gateway, but no trace of a corresponding pier could be found on the other side of the road. It had probably supported some small erection. The masonry was very rough, and contained large fragments of concrete from older floors, the stone used not being the same as that used in the construction of the roadways, the drain, and other works. One stone built into it, evidently taken from an older building, has apparently an iron rod let into it. Mr. Berrington, seeing the workmen picking under this masonry, and thus bringing to light several small articles, had it taken down. Immediately under it was a quantity of broken pottery and glass, two or three coins, two thin pieces of bronze, and a large iron knife apparently a *culter* of this shape.

But on digging two or three feet deep under and around it, several other coins (making ten in all from this point), the only legible one being a denarius of Augustus, a white bone stud, some decomposed bones, and a number of teeth (not human), were found, also



a small polished stone implement (evidently British). Further to the back of this wall were a number of pieces of flint, some of the ordinary thick dark blue glass, and a piece of a much brighter colour.

There was also some clear glass and pieces of what must have been a handsome dark sherry coloured bottle, with a handle, "the remains of which latter," says Mr. Berrington, "remind one of a brown slug." A small piece of clear glass with a raised blue line on it, various handles and bases of tall amphoræ, and fragments of Samian and black ware were found here.

It was here noticeable that the road was not in a line, from the point where it was found at *e*, but being found at two other points between *k* and *i*, Mr. Berrington was enabled to trace its correct course, as marked in the plan. In this neighbourhood was found a fragment of a slab of glass three and a half inches by three inches, and seven-sixteenths of an inch thick, consisting of—

First, a layer of dark blue glass, a quarter of an inch thick.

Second, a layer of turquoise blue glass one-eighth of an inch thick.

Third, a layer of olive green glass one-sixteenth of an inch thick.

All these layers were more or less opaque. The dark blue seems to be the same as that found at Caerleon, and described by Mr. O. Morgan at the Meeting of the Society of Antiquaries, May 3rd, 1877. It looks by transmitted light of a brownish green colour, but by a fresh fracture it is at once seen that, by reflected light, it is of a dark blue colour. As the turquoise layer would not be seen unless it was cut down to, Mr. Berrington pertinently asks, was the glass slab intended for the production of a species of cameos? Possibly this may be the solution of the matter. Proceeding southwards, an old pit was come upon, abounding in broken pottery, which was followed eastwards, and a handsome straight sided "Samian" jar, more than half perfect, and other fragments of pottery, many of which can be fitted together were found. Proceeding westwards in this pit more broken pottery was found, and an iron instrument shaped like a short scythe, six and a half inches long,

with a socket at right angles to the blade. It resembles one figured in Mr. Lee's *Isca Silurum*, pl. xxxvi, fig. 6, but is larger.

In cutting from *k* towards *i*, Mr. Berrington says, "We came upon an artificial gravel bank, which completely puzzled me." It is shaded in the plan at *l*, and the rough sketch of a section is appended. At the base of this bank was the usual large rough river gravel, on it the usual layer of two to three inches of river sand, with traces of charcoal. Immediately on this was a layer of gravel, fine enough for a carriage drive, in the form given in the section. "It looks like a double road with a footpath between, but would have been dangerous to drive upon, the outer edges being neatly formed to the fourth of a circle with a radius of two feet, the inner edges with a radius of one foot. The surface was quite hard, smooth, and even, as if cemented, though there was



no sign of this, but immediately the surface was broken through the gravel all ran out loose. It certainly could not have stood in this shape without some cement." On the top of this bank was found a *denarius* of Vespasian *Rev. COS. ITER. ET. TER. DESIG.* The upper surface of the embankment was five feet five inches below the surface, the width of that portion shewn on the right in the diagram was twelve feet, that on the left nineteen feet six inches, and the path between was three feet six inches in width. No remains were found in the gravel of the embankment. Was this a later roadway made at the same period as that found in the Priory Orchard? The depth from the surface was not the same as the latter and, I believe, the level above the river gravel bed was different. Its direction was somewhat similar to that of the older eastern road, but it was apparently parallel to it.¹ At *m* in the plan was found what was

¹ Mr. Berrington, in a recent letter, says, "This gravel road must have en-

croached upon the older eastern road, if the latter ran true."

apparently the kerb wall of another road, which fell rather diagonally than at right angles upon the main (old) roadway, though no traces of the latter existed at this point. It had a *gravel* footpath three feet six inches wide on one side of it. This is exactly the width of the footpaths in the older roads. Another pit was found to the east, similar to the others; in all of them pounded brick was scattered amongst the filling in, such as lies under the pitching of the roads, probably thrown in when the latter were partly destroyed. From this point to *i* the ground had been much disturbed, and very few remains were found, but amongst them were seven illegible coins, six being of third brass, and one of the class called *minimi*; an earthenware perforated bead, of a green colour, apparently produced by copper, exactly resembling one found near Dolgelly, engraved in Gibson's *Camden*, edition 1722; a piece of bronze, and a stone implement, polished, somewhat resembling in shape a spear-head, with a notch in it, apparently to attach it to a stick.

About a dozen fragments of lead, chiefly shewing that it had been run into sockets, abundance of large nails, two or three large round spikes, like the pointed end of a marling spike, between four and five inches long, a couple of circular iron discs (not nail heads), one and a quarter inch in diameter, two more white studs, a cornelian pebble partly rubbed down, a jasper pebble, many more fragments of dark blue and of white glass, &c., were found.

During the whole of the excavations flints were found, but they were chiefly down in the sand layer. It is probable that the earlier inhabitants of the place were using flint weapons on the appearance of the Romans.

At the point *i* the excavations terminated for the present, at the commencement of February last, the trenches being again closed up on the 6th of that month. In comparison with their extent the results had been small, but one or two points, I think, might be taken for granted.—

1st. That the roads joined at a point outside the *castrum*.

2nd. That the latter was more to the south, and apparently on the site of the gaol.

3rd. That the buildings upon the excavated ground were probably only of wood, as evident by the stratum of charcoal and the absence of roofing tiles.

Mr. Berrington, who, from his personal attention to the excavations, is better able to form an opinion upon them, takes much the same view. He says, "The results at which I arrive are that at the time when the Romans came and established themselves between the Usk and the Olway [Usk is at the junction of these rivers]—and the Usk is believed to have run much nearer the site in former times than it does now—the ground was simple rough gravel covered with a couple of inches of sharp sand and about six feet below the present level, our ground being somewhat higher than the surrounding country, chiefly in consequence of the filling from the foundations of the gaol and court-house, that the *castrum* lies under the gaol, and that the roads, as you suppose, crossed one another outside it. If I remember right, the road at the Brecon Gaer passes outside. [This is correct. —W. T. W.] The north road, which may probably yet be found in the Priory Field,¹ points towards Abergavenny; the east road points direct up the Olway valley, the way to Monmouth. The west road points to the river, a little above Llanbaddock, where, assuming the Usk to have changed its course, there may then have been a ford. The river now runs against a steep hill at this place, and the ford is just below Llanbaddock Church. About half a mile across the river the road would pass a place called the Helmaen, a corruption of 'Heolmaen' or 'Stone Road.' This road would be the most direct to Caerleon and would cross Pont Sadwrn, but, as Coxé says, the present road between Llantrissant and Newbridge is *remarkably* straight, which favours his view that the Romans went that way, *i.e.*, by the left bank. However, I cannot conceive that the west road led anywhere but to Caerleon." (I should have previously said that by probing with iron rods in the brook south of *Cae Putta*

¹ Mr. Berrington, in another letter, says:—"I was surprised that we did not come across the N. and S. road in the Priory Field, but was no longer so after

seeing how completely the other road has disappeared in places. We found there three or four of the pitching stones."

a hard foundation was found stretching across the brook, at the point where the southern road should have crossed the river. Mr. Berrington intends, if possible, to ascertain definitely whether this is not the south road, carried over the brook by a ford; south of this again this road has been found in a disused sawpit, which has always been known to be upon it). "The south road takes the line suggested by Coxe (p. 21) towards Llanllewell. The population where I have been digging must, as you say, have lived in wooden houses, and the site must have been subject to inundations, as the surrounding fields are at present. The floods deposited sandy loam, and this had raised the surface at least two feet before the place was burnt, the charred wood and the greater part of the nails being found about and above that level. The only undoubtedly Roman works found are the roads, footpaths, kerb walls and drain (all neatly constructed with *Castle* stone), the block of masonry at *k*, and the L shaped wall in the trench *a b*. This wall is about seven feet high. In much later, but still very ancient times, other walls were added to the last when it was still standing, and the whole were reduced to their present level at one time.

The ground has in very many places been dug into in small pits down to the original gravel, but these pits were as a rule dug before very much of the black soil had accumulated, and they are generally more abundant than other places in Roman pottery. The wooden houses were probably thatched. Some of the charred vegetable matter looks more like charred grass than wood, and falls to pieces at a touch.¹ No signs of roofing tiles were found except near the gaol wall, and then only a few fragments. Only a few pieces of brick were found. Pottery of some kind was probably made at *Burrium*, as I have found one or two of the little conical bits of clay, used for separating things in the kiln, unless these were used for the roofing tiles."

I am inclined to think that the lower and older roads were subject (near the river banks especially) to inunda-

¹ It is evident that the heat of the conflagration of *Burrium* must have been very great. Many pieces of stone have been so reddened by fire that the workmen kept them for pottery. Pieces of

pottery were splashed with molten lead, many of the bones found were calcined, and the upper side of a first brass coin of Trajan, found lying on the ground, was partially fused.

tions and were much destroyed in this manner. In the time of the Lower Empire the inhabitants, wearied of floods, raised the gravel roads at the higher level, probably only for a short distance until the low land was passed, and buildings which had been destroyed by the river, like apparently that at *n* (the older portion of wall) were rebuilt at a higher level, similar to the two rooms which were excavated round the last-named fragment of wall.¹ With regard to Mr. Berrington's view that the western road led to Caerleon, I think it doubtful. It might probably lead toward some of the Glamorganshire stations. There are great numbers of old pitched roads visible in the county, and until these are traced and connected it would be useless to speculate upon them. Mr. Berrington having examined a number of old deeds relating to *Cae Putta*, finds that in them it has been additionally called *Cae Pwdd*, *Cae Puddow*, and *Cae Puddon*. He thinks that the name is simply a corruption of the "Booth Field," as it is said a gipsy fair was occasionally held here.

The discovery of the incense, of which Mr. Berrington sent to me a small fragment, is peculiarly interesting. That it is Roman there can be no doubt whatever. It was found down in the Roman layer of charcoal and with undisturbed alluvial soil above it. From the analysis made by Messrs. Savory and Moore, it appears to contain myrrh and frankincense. The fragment in my possession, when burnt, emits a pleasant smell, similar to some other kinds of incense. The lumps of it had externally a charred appearance, and the analyser states that it has been altered by heat, such as the burning of the houses, although not actually ignited or deprived of its power of ignition. Unfortunately as it was confounded with the charcoal, but little was saved. This discovery is unique in the record of Britanno-Roman remains, though thuribles have occasionally been found, and it seems a matter of surprise that the scent should survive the lapse of sixteen or seventeen centuries. The fragment in my possession, after being burnt in one part, seemed to recover in some measure its odour, for after the lapse of three months it still retains it.

¹ Mr. Berrington informs me that foundations of buildings were found near the surface, which he considered

mediaeval, and has given no account of. May not these have been of the late Roman period like the gravel roads?

The name of *Burrium* appears to occur in a British form in the life of St. Cadoc, as published by the Rev. W. J. Rees' (of Cascob), "Lives of the Cambro British Saints," from the Cottonian MSS. in the Library of the British Museum (Vespasian, A xiv, p. 17, col. cum Titus, D xxii, p. 51). At page 390 of this volume a translation is given of a Latin passage at page 92 in the same volume, which runs as follows:—

"62. Of the field which Cynvelyn gave to Saint Cadoc. Be it known that Cynfelyn gave the field called Lisdin Borrior with his body, for the traffic of the heavenly kingdom, to God and Saint Cadoc, which would pay him annually six tierces of ale, with bread, and flesh and honey. And Conige is witness who under his hand wrote the corresponding deed."

To this a note is added by Mr. Wakeman "Din Birrion occurs in the *Liber Landavensis* page 465, and was given by Cynvelyn ap Cynog to Oudoceus, the same person evidently as this Cynfelin. It is possibly Usk, the *Burrium* of the Itineraries. The present church is dedicated to St. Mary, but there may have been a previous one dedicated to or built by Cadoc."

St. Oudoceus was one of the first bishops of Llandaff, and apparently contemporary with St. Cadoc. The same MS. mentions grants of other lands in this county to St. Cadoc, including one, p. 89, "Juxta civitatem Legionis" (Caerleon). The passage above referred to in the *Liber Landavensis* seems all the more probably to refer to Usk, under the name of Din Birrion, as the preceding one in the list is of a place five miles north-west of Monmouth, and the one before that of lands at Tintern Parva, and all the grants that come near are in the district, where they can be identified.

It has been thought that the "Byrthin," a brook which falls into the River Usk, on the opposite side, about a mile above the ancient *Burrium*, either derived its name from the ancient town, or itself gave the name to the latter. It seems, however, too far distant for this purpose, and its etymology may be derived from a totally different source.

The pottery found during the excavations was considerable, though mostly fragmentary. A few perfect

vessels I have mentioned previously. Forty large boxes were, however, removed to Mr. Berrington's residence containing fragments of every description of pottery, except Durobrivian, which seemed to be absent. The potter's marks were: On amphoræ—in addition to the one MCSR, already given—SARNINI, PROCVINI, and VIR, there being several examples of the latter, but they were all reversed. On the rim of a large cream coloured *mortarium* was the name C. ATISIVS. On the lips of other *mortaria* were DOMV., the v being ligulate with the M (this may be the same name as that given as DOMS. at Caerleon (*Isca Silurum*, Plate XXIII, fig. 14), which occurs on the handle of an amphora), IOVIN and HURS. On Samian ware the following marks occur:—OF. NGRI. (doubtless NIGRI), CINTVS. M., MARTIALIS. F., OFIC. PRIMI., IVCVI—., ATTIGL. M., BELL—., CAV. PIF—., OFFI. I—., and OFFEIC—. The first four are well known, being found in various places in the kingdom. On a very large fragment of an *amphora* was scratched the following: ^{VIII.} III. There is a good deal of Samian ware, plain and figured, much more of black ware, unfigured or with only scratched lines, all seeming to be of the same shape. Some very fragile yellow ware occurred, but with the quartz sand of *mortaria* inside. There were also some vessels like huge red water bottles with one handle, and the remains of a great number of amphoræ. No carved stone of any kind was found, and no hard mortar.



Mr. Berrington intends, if possible, to make further excavations in and around the station shortly. From various *indicia* it seems probable that much may yet be discovered to the south and west of the gaol and court-house. When fresh excavations occur I shall not fail to report the result.

The distance of Abergavenny from Usk (ten and a half to eleven English miles) on the one hand, and its distance from Kenchester (*Magna*) on the other, its etymology, and its being situated at the junction of two rivers, together with the course of the Roman roads, render it certain that it is the *Gobannium* of Antoninus. The Roman road running south from Kenchester is not at present visible, though in the time of Horsley it appears

to have been so. However, we have seen that a road (this same one) pointed northwards to Abergavenny from Usk. Horsley, in his *Britannia Romana*, p. 319, was the first who wrote upon it. He says—"At Abergavenny I had information of several Roman bricks found about the old castle, some of which had LEG. II. AVG. impressed on them. The two ingenious physicians there had each of them as they told me one of these bricks, but they were lost before I came thither. Dr. Roberts obliged me with the sight of several Roman coins found probably at this place. A gold Otho was also found here. I was told likewise of a Roman *balneum* or sudatory that was not very long ago to be seen at the castle, but is now filled up, though of this I was not so entirely satisfied. This, *together with the military way yet visible*, renders it sufficiently clear, that there must have been a station here," and he thought that the course of the Twelfth Iter in the *Itinerary* the distance and affinity of name proved it. From the *Beauties of England and Wales*, vol. xi, p. 91, we learn that Mr. Ward was informed that *several* bricks bearing the inscription LEG. II. AVG. had been found about the castle.—See also *Archæologia*, vol. v, p. 35.

The castle is in a commanding position at the end of a ridge, and was probably the site of the Roman *castrum*. In the *Archæologia Cambrensis*, vol. for 1876, p. 341, the following account is given of the castle:—

"These (the ruins) are of considerable extent, and judging from the plan given in Coxe's *Monmouthshire*, take the form of an irregular triangle. The principal entrance was between a square and a round tower at the north-west angle, and at the south-west angle, but outside the wall is the moated mound on which stood an earlier British fort. The whole occupies a slightly elevated plateau near the junction (*aber*) of the Gavenny and the Usk. The luxuriance of the ivy concealed the masonry and architectural features, but in general character and date it appeared to correspond with the neighbouring castles of Grosmont, Skenfrith and White-castle. An accurate ground plan and description of the castle are much desiderated," &c.

In vol iv. of the *Journal* of the British Archæological

Association, pp. 313-14, and in the Worcester volume of the same Society, pp. 273-4, it is stated that in trenching the nursery grounds of Mr. James Saunders at Abergavenny a workman struck his spade against a cistvaen, composed of five stones rudely put together. In it were found two vases and two *patera* of Samian ware, &c. The discovery is, however, more fully given in the above-named volume (1876) of the *Archæologia Cambrensis*, p. 348 (the pottery being exhibited at the temporary museum formed by the Cambrian Archæological Society at their Abergavenny meeting) as follows:—

Romano-British pottery from a cistvaen discovered Jan. 19th, 1848, in Mr. Saunders' nursery ground on the Hereford road, Abergavenny. In the cistvaen Anderson the workman found five vases, each resting in a *patera*, and occupying the four angles, with the larger one in the centre. Inside this larger one was found a dark pasty substance, and surrounding the *patera* charred bones to the depth of about two inches. The *patera* is of Samian ware, and stamped with the letters IVLLIN, probably the name of the potter, &c." The volumes of the British Archæological Association above referred to state that some years before several cists of a similar nature were discovered in Mr. Saunders' grounds by the workmen, but it is believed that in these a large number of gold and silver coins were contained in the vases placed in the cists, and were sold by the workmen. The remains of a Roman causeway have been traced across the grounds in the vicinity of the cists.¹

At the same temporary museum there was also exhibited by George Moore, Esq., a "cinerary urn containing bones, more recently found in the grounds of George Moore, Esq., about three hundred yards from where the above were found. The thick fragments are portions of a larger urn in which this urn was placed."

These discoveries plainly indicate the site of the cemetery of the station; they will probably be found to have occurred each side of the causeway named. Was this road the north and south one from Kenchester? Systematic excavations here would probably reveal inscribed tombstones.

¹ *Vide* also vol. iii, *Archæologia Cambrensis*, p. 172.

At the same museum were exhibited :—By Mr. John Morgan—Neck of a Roman amphora dug up in 1874, six feet under the surface of the road, near the Castle gate, Abergavenny. By Mr. H. J. Edmunds—Neck and handle of a Roman amphora found in digging a sewer by the Sun Inn, Abergavenny, 1866. By Rev. Thomas Jones—A bronze *stylus* found in Castle street, Abergavenny.

So far, this seems to be the sum total of the discoveries at Abergavenny, but they are sufficient to show that much remains beneath the surface, and only wants excavation to bring it to light. There are vestiges of various Roman roads in the neighbourhood. Coxe, p. 24, mentions a very fine one leading from Abergavenny to Neath.

As I said at the opening of my paper, the station of *Blestium* must have been somewhere between Usk and Bury Hill, near Weston-under-Penyard, in Herefordshire, and so on the Gloucestershire side of the county of Monmouth. Various causes point to the town of Monmouth itself as the site. It is situated as usual on a *lingula* or tongue of land at the junction of two rivers, the Wye and the Monnow. We have seen that the road (east) from Usk pointed in this direction, but its course cannot exactly be traced. There appear to be, from various local names, such as “Pen-y-clawdd” (head of the bank), “Cold Harbour,” “Cayo Farm” (twice), with remains of pitched causeways, at least two old roads running between Usk and Monmouth, but it is uncertain which was the one followed by the Itinerary. (Into the question of the roads of this county I hope to enter at some future time.) A road called “Whitchurch Street,” passing the Roman villa at that place, appears to have run from Monmouth to Bury Hill, which was the course of the *Iter* after leaving *Blestium*, and, as Coxe says, the only undoubted Roman road, visible near Monmouth in his time, led from the opposite bank of the river up the Kymin (a hill) and so to Stanton (*i.e.*, Stone Town), in Gloucestershire. Part of a pitched road, according to Mr. Berrington, is still visible on the east side of the Kymin, though the traces are faint.

But to return. Hardly anything Roman has been found at Monmouth. Horsley considered it to be *Blestium*, but admitted he knew of nothing Roman having

ever been discovered there. Leland states that in his time Monmouth had four gates in its walls, but they do not appear to have been placed as Roman gates would have been. Since Horsley's time two coins of Constantine the Great were found in 1767, in the garden of the head master of the Free School (Gough's *Camden*, edit. 1789, vol. ii, p. 483). In the Caerleon Museum there is a third brass coin of the same emperor, found at Monmouth Castle—*Rev. GENIO. POP. ROM.* It was presented by the late Thomas Dyke, Esq.—Lee's *Isca Silurum*, p. 80.

I am also indebted to my friend Mr. J. P. Earwaker, F.S.A., for an account of a Samian bowl or patera found in the town. It occurs in the Ashmolean MSS, 826, f. 56, preserved in the Bodleian Library, and reads—"An urn of very fine red clay, found at Monmouth in 1649 by Mr. — Melborne, having on the bottom the word [SATVRNVS]." This evidently is the mark of a well-known potter, Saturninus, of whose handiwork many specimens occur in various parts of the kingdom.

These, however, are trifling discoveries; and though the distance from Usk is correct, eleven miles as the crow flies, it is strange nothing more has been found than what might be expected at any spot on the line of a Roman road. But while there is nothing at Monmouth, at Stanton before-named, only three miles off, many evidences occur. Its name, the course of the Roman road, the church font made out of a Roman altar, immense quantities of scoriæ about the fields, the village in fact being built upon a mass of slag, vestiges of entrenchments until lately visible near the church, and, as Mr. Berrington informs me, one of the fields is quite black, though those around it are of a red earth. Mr. Berrington also ascertained that about forty or fifty years ago a pot of coins was found "near the old castle." This, from subsequent information, must have been unearthed in or near the "black" field named. It was said to have contained "four or five quarts." Mr. Berrington, by great perseverance, succeeded in tracing one of the coins, which, I find, is of Salonina, *reverse VESTA. FELIX.* It is either a third brass, or has been a plated denarius, slight traces of silver being visible on

the obverse. But the distances here from Gloucester, from Bury Hill, and from Usk will not agree. We are therefore led to conclude that Monmouth only can be the site of *Blestium*. Its distance from Bury Hill as well as from Usk suits. There appears to have been a Roman road from it, down the west bank of the Wye towards Tintern and Chepstow, passing a Roman smelting furnace at Coed Ithel. It is very probable that a small Roman station existed at Chepstow. Coxe, pp. 365 and 369, states that there are Roman bricks in both church and castle. Mr. White (*British Archaeological Association Journal*, vol. x, p. 282) was struck by the castle, it appearing quite different from any others of the Norman period which he had ever seen. He advocated excavation to endeavour to settle the origin of the castle, whether it was not Roman. A course of Roman tiles "ran round three sides" of the castle, and part of the fourth side, "and they were all exceedingly regular." In the *Proceedings* of the Somerset Archaeological Society, vol. xiv, p. 25, it is stated that among the articles exhibited at the temporary museum formed at the Bristol Meeting, August 27, 1867, were "a collection of Roman British fibulæ, studs, bronze armlets, rings, &c., discovered near Chepstow in 1861—some of them enamelled. Mr. William Edkins was the exhibitor. Mr. W. O. Seys, of Tutshill House, Chepstow, informs me that about 1867 he found about 500 yards on the Gloucestershire side of Chepstow Bridge a heap of broken Roman pottery, and amongst it was a coin of Antoninus Pius, and several other illegible Roman coins. He further informs me that he has often seen the foundation of a Roman bridge across the Wye, at low water, during high spring tides. "It looks," he says, "like a landing stage, and is composed of wooden piles. It is in the line of Roman road from Gloucester to Caerwent. I have myself struck the road in three distinct places within a mile of the site of the piles on the Gloucestershire side of the Wye." Reynolds, in his *Iter Britanniarum*, p. 431, says that a beautiful Roman pavement was found at Chepstow in 1689; but I think this is an error, and that he refers to the tessellated pavement found at Caerwent (*Venta Silurum*) in the same year, this place being only a few miles distant.

With this I must draw to a close. There are very many points in this same county which abound in Roman *vestigia*, in addition to those so ably described by Mr. Lee in his *Isca Silurum* (Caerleon and Caerwent), but these must for the present remain in abeyance. I have endeavoured honestly, though imperfectly I fear, to detail all that is known relative to the three stations, *Burrium*, *Gobannium*, and *Blestium*; and when other discoveries are made, which cannot fail to be the case should Mr. Berrington renew his excavations, I shall again return to the subject.