

## ROMAN INSCRIPTIONS IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.<sup>1</sup>

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Singularly few, considering the number of stations and villas, are the Roman inscriptions of Northamptonshire. With the two great roads, Ermin street and Watling street, traversing the county, with stations at Castor, Daventry, Towcester, Irchester, Mill Cotton, Thenford, Thorpe (near Great Shawney), Black Lands (at Chipping Warden), and Black Land Furlong near King's Sutton, it might have been supposed that a number of inscriptions would have been found, but the contrary is the case. In connection with the station at Castor two (or possibly three) are recorded as having been found. The first is named in Gough's *Camden* (edit. 1806), vol. ii, p. 257, and was said to occur on some scraps of white wood (? bone), found in a stone sarcophagus in 1754, with coins of Faustina, Gordian, &c., and other remains. It was in mixed Greek and Latin characters, thus—

ΑΛΟΙΓΥ VTERE TA FELIX.

It will be difficult to extract any meaning from this. The first word seems to be ΑΛΟΙΓΥ. The phrase VTERE FELIX frequently occurs in Roman-British inscriptions. It was found "near Chesterton," but whether on the Huntingdonshire or Northants side of the river is not said.

From the *Gentleman's Magazine* 1786, p. 1034, and the same work 1795, p. 741, we learn that a Roman milestone, bearing the name of the Emperor Florianus, was found in 1785, "on the east side of Bridge Close in Chesterton lordship, Huntingdonshire, south of the river Nene. The castra (*sic*) or camp lay north of the same river one mile." It bore the inscription—

IMP . CAES  
M . ANNIO  
FLORIANO  
P . F . INVICTO  
AVG  
M . P . L .

On the 27th May, 1799, Richard Gough, the antiquary presented this stone to Trinity College, Cambridge. He sent with it, a long Latin letter, in which he states that it was found in digging a drain near Water Newton. On my writing to the Rev. Mr. Sinker, librarian of the college, as to this, he made some researches, and re-discovered Gough's letter. Both Chesterton and Water Newton are in the county of Huntingdon, but the stone undoubtedly belongs to the great station at Castor. The Emperor Florianus only reigned for a few months, so that this stone must have been inscribed in the year A.D. 276.

<sup>1</sup> Communicated to the meeting of the Institute at Northampton.

The date of this discovery was long before the late Mr. Artis commenced his researches in the locality, yet in his *Durobrivæ*, Plate xv, fig. 2, he gives an engraving of a stone with an exactly similar inscription which he says was found in "Normangate Field." If such a stone was discovered it was a duplicate, as at the time Mr. Artis was excavating the first named stone was at Cambridge. It is probable, from its present appearance, that the last letters in the 1785 stone were L', and marked fifty-one miles from some station, the name of which does not appear upon it.

In the above-mentioned plate also Mr. Artis engraves (fig. 1) a stone found at Castor, "in removing a part of the old wall, on the north side of the fortified ground." It was only a fragment, and the remaining letters were—

M A R T O

The next discovery of an inscription was in 1822 at Whittlebury, when Mr. Baker informs us, in his *History of Northants*, vol. ii, p. 73, several portions of Roman bricks were found, one fragment bearing the abbreviation LEG. and another the letters xx.v.v. These fragments, which seemed in some degree to fit each other, came into the possession of Sir Henry Dryden, who has deposited them in the Northampton Museum. Together they form the stamp of the 20th Legion: *Leg(io) xx V(aleria) V(ictrix)*.

The next discovery was in 1854, when a Roman tombstone, now preserved in the British Museum, was found at Irchester. It bore the inscription (divested of ligatures)—

D. M. S  
ANICIUS . SATVRV  
STRATOR . COS . M . S . F.

Its reading is probably:—*D(is) M(anibus) S(acrum) Anicius Saturu(s) strator co(n)sulari s(m)onumentum s(ibi) f(ecit)*.

A Roman *tessera* of burnt clay and about one inch in diameter, and similar to a number of others found at Britanno-Roman stations, found in Northamptonshire, but where is not stated, is described in vol. vii of the *Archæological Journal*, p. 71. It was inscribed—



The last discovery was that of a Roman flanged roof tile found in 1867 at Hilly Wood, two miles east of Woodcroft, and on the line of the Ermin street between Castor and the Lincolnshire boundary. (*Archæological Journal*, vol. xxxi, p. 356.) It was inscribed—

LEG . IX . HIS.

i.e., *Leg(io) IX His(panica)*, "the Ninth Legion (named) the Spanish."

Such appear to be the whole of the Roman inscriptions recorded as discovered in Northants. That great numbers still lie buried around the stations I have named may be accepted as a great probability, and it is to be hoped that excavations like those undertaken by the Rev. R. S. Baker, will be the means of bringing many of them into the light.