

## RECENT ROMAN DISCOVERIES AT MARYPORT, BECKFOOT AND CIRENCESTER.

By W. THOMPSON WATKIN.

Since the beginning of April Mr. Joseph Robinson of Maryport has been making considerable excavations in the vicinity of the Roman *castrum* at that place, which have resulted in a number of interesting discoveries.

The primary object in view was to trace the Roman road from the great station (*Axelodunum*) at Maryport to the newly discovered *castrum* at Beckfoot, noticed in the *Journal* in December last. This had been satisfactorily done to the fourth field beyond the Maryport station, the road having been uncovered in many places, and found in perfect condition and of the most substantial structure, when on the 17th April two stones were observed slightly projecting above the surface of the ground, which were immediately dug out. One was found to be only the square base of a pedestal or altar. The other stone was found entire, and is most interesting in its features. Its total height is four feet, of which there is, first, a square base fourteen inches high, on which is, secondly, an octagonal shaft one foot ten inches in height, then a nearly circular head one foot high. On the latter there is sculptured, on the front of the stone, a female face or mask face, with two snakes above the head and two fishes under the chin. The whole length of the back of the stone is occupied by the figure of a serpent three feet nine inches in length. The sculpture would seem to belong to a good period of art; but this point may be judged from the accompanying illustrations, which represent the front and back of the entire stone.

In front of the larger stone was a pavement thirteen feet by six, and underneath were several urns containing burnt bone and charcoal. Three stone cists were discovered in the vicinity, two of them containing human remains, also two stones cut to represent fir cones (a well known Roman emblem of immortality), one sixteen inches high, the other nine inches. There was also a portion of a monumental figure, with the head and lower extremities broken off. It resembles several found on the line of the Wall of Hadrian. A portion of another serpent was also found, which had probably been part of the monument of which the base was discovered previously.

It is an interesting question, What is the nature of the larger stone? Is it a tombstone? If so, does it refer to the deceased being a member of any particular sect? The surroundings of the discovery suggest that the spot was one of the usual road-side Roman cemeteries. Again, is it



Roman Tombstone found at Maryport.

probable that it was a medium of worship in the same sense as an altar? I incline to the opinion that we have in it a relic of Gnosticism.

The Rev. C. W. King writes to me as to these stones to the following effect :—

"There can be no doubt they are Phalli, which emblem was a primitive style of tombstone, for example on the tumulus of Alyattes at Sardis, where a gigantic specimen stands to this day.

"The sculptures are Mithraic. Caylus, *Rec. d'Antiquités*, iii, Pl. 94, figures a tablet with a serpent of the same form, inscribed, '*Deo invicto Mith. Secundinus dat.*' It is a marble slab found at Lyons. The serpent forms a regular part of all Mithraic groups, where it is explained as signifying the element water.

"The meaning of the full face mask is not so easy to divine, but may be that of the Gallic sun-god Belenus, who wears a more ferocious aspect than his Greek brother Phœbus-Apollo. The nature of these tombstones seems to imply that they marked the interment of persons initiated into the Mithraic rites. They are certainly the most curious things of the sort that have ever come to light in this country."

Returning to the second field from the camp Mr. Robinson dug up on the 28th April a rough freestone pavement, apparently leading direct to the spot where the great find of seventeen altars occurred in 1870, and by the side of it was found an altar with the base broken off, inscribed :

I . O . M  
G . CABA  
LLIVS . P  
RISCVS  
TRIBVN

*i.e.*, I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) G(aius) Caballius Priscus Tribun(us). This is the fourth altar dedicated by this officer to Jupiter which has been found at Maryport. From the others we learn that he was the Tribune of the first cohort of the Spaniards. The altar is one foot eleven inches in height.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the pavement were found the foundations of a building measuring (nearly east and west) forty feet in length and of oblong shape, with an entrance vestibule of six feet, making forty-six feet as the entire length. The breadth is twenty-five feet. The walls were two feet six inches in thickness, and near the north-east angle was the base of an altar *in situ*. In front of the vestibule was a very peculiar pavement. It appears evidently to have been a temple. Can it have been, from the close proximity of the altar of Jupiter, dedicated to that divinity?

On the 1st May, twenty feet to the west of this temple, Mr. Robinson came upon the foundations of a circular building, thirty-four feet in external diameter, with walls two feet thick. In the centre is a large heap of stones, three feet in depth and without order, but the area has not yet been excavated, with the exception of an opening of a foot square in the middle of the heap, which contained nothing but water, and this disappeared in a few days. Above the centre was a coin of Antoninus Pius. On one side of the building was a funeral pyre and a cist, with a layer of charcoal fourteen inches in thickness. The building very strongly resembles one found at Keston (Kent), adjoining the Roman

<sup>1</sup> A heap of broken pottery and four Roman coins were found lying with it.

camp at that place, by the late Mr. T. Crofton Croker, F.S.A. Like this last, it has buttresses.

On the 3rd May a fine altar, which had been inscribed, was dug up, but the inscription had been purposely obliterated, with the exception of two letters at the end of the first line. These letters are *ET*, and serve to shew that the altar had been dedicated to more than one deity. Probably the inscription commenced in a similar manner to others found in the same place.—

I. O. M. ET  
NVM. AVG.

Two carved heads, which appear to have been portions of a tomb, were found, and also a *Dea Mater*.

Simultaneously with Mr. Robinson's operations, a new quarry has been opened upon the slope of the hill between the camp and the sea. The workmen found a number of squared stones, as if from some building above, and a quantity of pottery, &c. One of the stones bore the inscription :—

LEG. XX.

It is, of course, the mark of the twentieth legion.

Mr. Robinson turned his attention subsequently to this quarter, with a view of preserving any remains which might be found. In this excavation a fine altar three feet five inches high has been dug up, but the inscription is much weathered. As far as I can make it out the inscription is :—

I. O. M.  
N.....  
.....AM  
.....IANA. Q. F.  
HERMIONE.

The base of another small household altar was also found and a number of peculiarly cut stones. Excavations are still proceeding.

The whole of these remains have been added to the already great collection of Roman monuments at Nether Hall, the seat of Mrs. Pocklington Senhouse.

#### BECKFOOT.

In the recent excavations at the *castrum* here an uninscribed altar and a figure of a presumed deity were found. The latter Mr. C. Roach Smith thinks is Diana as Luna Lucifera, but I doubt this appropriation, and consider it to have been a local deity, from the fact of a similar figure existing in the Museum at St. Germain, near Paris, understood generally to be a local divinity.

#### CIRENCESTER.

A Roman altar was found in May during the excavations for the sewerage works in Sheep street, Cirencester. It is thirty inches in height, and was broken into no less than forty-five pieces, but has been put together by Mr. Bowly, the curator of the Museum. It bears on its face the figure of a genius holding, as usual, in the left hand a cornucopia, and with the right pouring out a libation from a patera upon an altar. The inscription has evidently been :—

G. S. HVIVS LOCI.

which I would expand, as in other instances where we have the two first words in full :—*Genio Sancto Hujus Loci* ; but Professor Hübner expands the *s.* as *Sacrum*.