

ART. XX.—*On the Stations Aballaba, Congavata, and Axelodunum, along the Roman Wall, in Cumberland.* By the Rev. John Maughan, A.B., Rector of Bewcastle.

Read at Kirkby Lonsdale, August 10, 1870.

ABALLABA—CAMBEC-FORT.

A FORMER paper of mine was devoted to the important archæological enquiry, whether the picturesque ruin at Lanercost had been built on the site of a Roman station. In this essay I shall endeavour to allocate the Roman names of Cambeck-fort (or Castlesteads), Brampton, and Watchcross, once Roman stations of considerable importance. Supposing, therefore, that Lanercost was the station called Petriana, in the *Notitia Occidentalis Imperii*, where were the three succeeding stations, *per lineam Valli*—Aballaba, Congavata, and Axelodunum.

Camden, guided by the similarity of the names, placed Aballaba at Appleby, in Westmorland; and supposing that Congavata signifies in British, “the vale on the Gavata,” now contracted into Cauda, he consequently placed this station at Rose Castle, *about seven miles south of the Wall*. He also places Axelodunum at Hexham, from its resemblance to the name Hextoldesham. This allocation, however, may be regarded as somewhat beyond the range of probabilities, for stations so distant from each other, and from the wall, and so unconnected, could scarcely be regarded by the author of the *Notitia* as stations *per lineam Valli*. Horsley and Warburton placed Aballaba at Watchcross, Congavata at Stanwix, and Axelodunum at Burgh-upon-Sands, because this situation suited exactly those rules which the Romans generally observed in making their stations, and because they considered them in the regular order of the stations *per lineam Valli*. Hodgson, and others, reject Watchcross altogether as a station *per lineam Valli*, and places Aballaba at Stanwix. Here then we have a group of conflicting allocations, and although etymology cannot effect a complete pulverisation of the difficulty, yet it possesses certain surroundings which may be of considerable value in leading us into the right path. I venture, therefore, to suggest that Cambec-fort may have been the Aballaba; Brampton the Congavata; and Watchcross the Axelodunum,

Axelodunum, of the Romans, and very probably of their occupier before them. It is remarkable that a family of the name of Appleby were the owners of Cambec-fort down to a very recent period; and if we adopt the suggestion of Camden, that Appleby is merely a corruption of Aballaba, we may assume that the ancestors of this family may have been from a very remote period the occupiers of this fort. At all events the Appleby family appear to have been a very ancient family in this district, and also a family of note, for one of them, Thomas de Appleby, was consecrated bishop of Carlisle, A.D. 1363.

Aballaba may be thus derived. The Celtic word *balla* or *bally*, Gaelic *bailé*, and Irish *ballagh*, meant "a town." The Celtic word *ba* (a corruption of *bar*) meant "a bank." Aballaba would therefore be "the town on the bank." Now this camp stands near the river Cambec, which runs close to the north side of it, at the foot of a steep bank or scaur. This derivation is decisive enough to overcome any moderate scruples, but, as old names were often obscured by the change of a letter, Aballaba may have been mistaken for Aballava, "the town on the river." The allocation of either name can scarcely be questioned for its propriety.

This station is about half a mile south of the wall, and the Vallum. The Notitia places a prefect of a Numerus Maurorum Aurelianorum at Aballaba. These Moors styled Aurelian were probably a detachment of cavalry, as their country was famous for it. From the inscribed stones belonging to Cambec-fort we find that the 1st and 2nd cohort of the Tungrians, and the 4th cohort of the Gauls, must have been posted here at some period, but there is no stony memorial yet discovered of these Moors, either here or elsewhere. If stationed at Cambec-fort in the time of the Notitia, they may not have garrisoned it for any protracted period, and perhaps have left no stony memorial behind them.

In the year 1856 an altar was found near this station with an inscription upon it, which I venture to read thus:—

NAV G

DIIO VANA

VN TI AVREL

ARMIGER

DEC PRINC

"Numini Augusti Diio Vanaun Titus Aurelius Armiger
Decurio Principalis."—"To the deity Augustus and to the god
Vanaun

"Vanaum, Titus Aurelius Armiger, a chief Decurion, "dedicates this." Here we have the double I in Diio, by epenthesis, same as *reliigio* for *religio*—*DIIO*—*VANAVN* may be the Roman form for the Welsh or British words *DHV FINNON*—"the god of the fountains." The camp stands near the confluence of the rivers Irthing, King, and Cambeck. In 1859, an altar, with the 4th cohort of the Gauls inscribed, was found by Mr. Joseph Parker, of Brampton, near to Kylesyke hill, about a mile north of Cambeck-fort, thus raising a presumption that these Moors were not the only warriors that occupied this fort.

CONGAVATA—BRAMPTON.

It may be assumed that the name of this station has been taken from its position. *Con*, or *Cond*, meant a "height," or perhaps as here, "elevated dry ground"—*ga*, an "angle, corner, or nook,"—*vat*, "a ford," perhaps synonymous with "wath," old Norse "vadd," Anglo-Saxon "wad," Latin "vadum;" a general name in the north of England for a "ford." Congavata, therefore, would simply mean "a station on the height at the nook-ford." This derivation harmonises with the nature of the ground. The river appears to have run, at some former period, close to the end of the fine bold ridge on which the camp and its adjacent villages have been placed. At the end of this ridge there is a depression of the left bank of the river Irthing, affording a facility of access, and here the ford nestled in a snug little nook, which name "the nook," the adjoining farm still retains. The old road from Carlisle to Newcastle, after passing through the village of Irthington, crossed the river at this ford, and it is still used as a ford, when the river permits. It is difficult to contemplate the position of this camp without recognising the appropriateness of the designation conveyed in the word "Congavata."

The Notitia places a Tribune of the 2nd cohort of the Lergi at Congavata, but no inscribed stone has been found either at this or any other station on the wall, recording the name of this cohort, so that we are left entirely to etymology as our guide.

This camp is about a mile and a quarter south of the lineam Valli, and about two miles south-west from Cambeck-fort, and traces on the road, or via militaris, connecting the two stations are still visible, passing Crooke Holme farm house and Irthington mill, where we find the foundations of a bridge, probably a Roman Bridge, the wooden piles being visible
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in summer when the water is low. Congavata may be supposed to have been one of the old British towns on the line of the old British road, afterwards occupied by one of the garrisons of Agricola, and retained by the Romans at one of the stations per lineam valli. It has no entrenchment opposite to it like Vindolana and Lanercost, but being almost opposite to the station at Cambec-fort, such an additional support would not be required.

About fourteen pounds weight of silver coins of the lower empire were found at this station, buried in an earthen jar, with a stone cover—and one silver coin of Antoninus in it, also several querns have been found here.

This station is scarcely traceable now; there is merely a slight elevation above the adjoining ground, showing in places where the ramparts have been. There are no traces of a ditch. The site is easily recognised by the fragments of broken stone and other debris. There are traces of suburbs on the south and the north sides of the station, in the west field. Faint traces of a village may also be seen in the east side, which appear to have run down the hill to Brampton beck, near to a place called the Stank, which appears to have been a dam for the formation of a large reservoir. In a field on the south side of the station, are apparently several tumuli, but it has been questioned whether they are not the remains of an embankment.

ALEXODUNUM—WATCHCROSS.

This name may have been probably assigned by the old British occupiers from the nature of the ground. On the Rudge Cup the name is Uxelodumo, evidently the same word as Uxelodunum, now supposed to be Cadenac, in Gaul. *Uxelo* is identical with *uchel*, i.e., "high." *Dun* or *dunadh*, (*duny*), signifies a fortress, from *dunam*, "to shut or barricade,"—"Uxelodunum" would therefore mean "the fortress on the high ground." In Ptolemy we find the names of two towns of like import, namely, Uxelum, one of the four towns assigned by Ptolemy to the Selgrovæ, (now often assigned to Caerlaverock, in Dumfries); and Uzella, which Camden supposed to be Lestuthiel, in Cornwall, from its dry situation. Whittaker supposes "Axelodunum" to be a British word, and derives it from "Axel-o-dun," "the dry town." Each of these derivations accords with the situation of Watchcross.

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The Notitia places the 1st cohort of the Spaniards at Axelodunum, but the allocation of this cohort at Watchcross has not been confirmed by the testimony of any stony memorial, either here or at any station near the Roman Wall. Horsley mentions two centurial inscriptions as belonging to Watchcross.

LEG II AVG
>IVLI TE
RTVIII A

> O SIL
AVCINI

He also supposed that an altar at Scaleby Castle must have belonged to this place, but none of these stones records this cohort. At Ellenborough we find three stones, and two at Netherby, with the name of this cohort inscribed, but there can be no probability that both of these stations were called Axelodunum. It has been stated that the Roman cohorts continued to reside in the stations which were first assigned to them on their coming into Britain, and that they never removed from them till they again left this country. From the position of these stones, however, we may fairly infer that this first cohort of Spaniards must have occupied different garrisons during its sojourn, and that it cannot have been permanently settled at Ellenborough, Netherby, or Axelodunum. From this change of position, and from the changes which we may observe with respect to other stations, we may conclude that the certainty of determining the proper appellation of each station by inscriptions corresponding with the appointments of the Notitia is considerably diminished.

A doubt has been expressed by Hodgson, and subsequent inquirers, whether Watchcross could have been a permanent camp, or merely a temporary summer encampment, but Horsley, towards the beginning of the last century, tells us that "the ramparts and ditches are very fair and visible," and Hutchinson says "the vallum and ditches are very distinct—it remains very perfect—the place of the prætorium is still conspicuous."

The site of this station has been well known, and the people of the district generally call it "Steadfolds," tradition says that the buildings were standing and used in the moss-trooping times, for folding the cattle. Dr. Bruce says "all traces of the camp have been obliterated." This, however, is scarcely the case, for although most of the stones were carted to Bleatarn for building, yet there is one large stone still preserved as a gatepost, at the north-west corner of the field, which was taken from

from the foundations. On the site of the camp we may still find fragments of flints, granites, red freestone, bricks, ancient mortar, and red ironstone. The ground on the south side of the station is much heavier, darker, and wetter than on the station itself, so that its site is still traceable, and appears to be correctly laid down on the map of the survey of the Roman wall. "Hutchinson's irregular lines and breastworks," on the south side of the hill were probably only the suburbs of the fortress.

This camp had a very commanding prospect. It was about three miles from Cambec-fort, and two-and-a-half from the Brampton camp, and about a-mile-and-half south of the wall and vallum. It is a remarkable coincidence that at Bleatarn, which is on the wall, and nearly opposite to Watchcross, we find traces of a large entrenchment, so that in this respect it bears an analogy with the positions of Vindolana and Lanercost. It is possible that this may have been one of the stations of Agricola, for it is very near the old military road from Carlisle to Newcastle, which is still easily traceable, as it passes on the north side of this station. On these data we may infer that Watchcross was at least one of the stations mentioned in the Notitia, and very probably the site of Axelodunum, the sixteenth camp "*per lineam Valli*."

ART. XXI.—*On the Stations Olenacum and Virosidum along along the Roman Wall, in Cumberland.* By the Rev. John Maughan, A.B., Rector of Bewcastle.

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IN this, my last paper on the stations *per lineam Valli*, I would suggest that Olenacum may have been the station now called Drumburgh. It is a very small station, apparently not more than three-quarters of an acre, but it is placed in a strong and commanding position.

In speaking of the station at Ellenborough, Dr. Bruce says that "Camden pronounced it to have been Olenacum." This, however, appears to have been a mistake, for we find Ellenborough suggested as Olenacum only in Holland's Insertions

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