

ART. VI.—*Brocavum, Ninekirks and Brougham : a study in continuity.* By W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON, O.B.E., M.A., D.Litt., F.S.A.

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IN a recent study, Professor Ian A. Richmond, with that mastery of the synoptic view which illumines all his writings, has thus set forth the intersecular importance of the Stainmore Road:

"The Stainmore Pass, between Yorkshire and Westmorland, and the Ouse and Eden basins, has always been one of the major traffic routes of northern Britain. In prehistoric times it carried the brilliant La Tène metal work from East Yorkshire to Dumfriesshire, Galloway and Ireland. In Roman days it was at first the main line of penetration into Cumberland, from the great base fortress, or legionary headquarters, at York, and presently became the main route to the western end of Hadrian's Wall. In subsequent ages the Roman highway determined the shape of things to come. On this route, as described in a famous Saga, fell Eric Bloodaxe in 954 at the battle of Rey Cross, on the very summit of the pass. By this road, and their great castles strung out along it from Bowes to Carlisle, the Norman Kings broke the regional traditions of Strathclyde and in the event settled that Cumberland, like Northumberland, should be English and not Scottish. Later still, when commerce became the very life-stream of English prosperity, pack-horse tracks and an arterial coach-road followed with tolerable closeness the Roman road; and, last of all, the pass was occupied by a railway which carries, over the highest railroad summit in England a heavy mineral traffic between the north-eastern coal-fields and the north-western shipyards and furnaces."¹

The first user — and probably the maker — of the Stainmore Pass was a glacier: the great ice-stream which, from its gathering ground in what is now the basin of the Irish Sea, came over the Pennines and invaded the Vale of York, at its greatest extension reaching as far south as Tadcaster.² And so soon as the pass was clear

¹ *Aspects of Archaeology* (W. H. F. Grimes) 293.

² See *VCH Yorkshire* i 78-9, 80, 84.

of the ice that had scooped it out, and once the Vale of Eden had become fit for human habitation, we may conclude that hunter man will have made his way over the *col* from the basin of the Ouse, and the East Yorkshire Wolds, which we know have been settled at least since Mesolithic times. Not until the early Bronze Age, however, do we seem to have certain traces of the presence of man at Brougham. In the collection of the Society of Antiquaries at Burlington House is a beaker from Brougham, which is said to have been found in a short cist along with a food vessel.³ If this ascription is correct, the presence of a food vessel would certainly seem to point to immigration from Yorkshire, the principal seat of the food-vessel culture. In this burial, therefore, we have certain evidence of the presence of man at Brougham at least as early as *circa* 1500 B.C.

It is not, however, until the coming of the Romans that we are justified in postulating a permanent settlement at Brougham. So far as I am aware, there is no pottery or other evidence, meantime available, to suggest that the site was occupied in Flavian times: but the recent identification, by air-photography, of a second fort, or fortlet, within five hundred yards to the south of the visible site,⁴ warns us that the history of *Brocavum* is likely to be a complicated one, and we must await the systematic excavation of both sites which one hopes will some day be taken in hand. One thing at all events is beyond doubt, that *Brocavum* occupies a position of much strategic importance. Here the Lowther and the Eamont valleys meet, and here also the Stainmore Road is joined by the Great North Road which ran from Manchester (*Mamucium*) along the western skirts of the Pennine range to *Luguvalium*, the modern Carlisle. From Brougham, also, another road, a marvel of Roman engineering, known in mediæval times as *Brettestrete*, or the metalled road of

³ *Chadwick Memorial Studies* 45 and Plate II (a); *Archæologia* xlv 411.

⁴ See J. K. St. Joseph, "Air Reconnaissance of North Britain", in *Journal of Roman Studies* xli 53.

Corder.⁹ Here what has been termed Romano-Saxon pottery has been discovered, showing a remarkable fusion of late Roman and Saxon ceramic techniques. According to Mr J. N. L. Myres, it must have been made by or for people who were accustomed to a purely Teutonic style in pottery decoration. Mr Myres suggested that it may have been made during the last days of the Roman villa for Saxon slaves; or even for Saxon "friendlies" hired, in the common late Roman fashion, as a sort of garrison against raids from their compatriots, or perhaps against the brigandage which became common during the break-up of the imperial administration. He even speculated whether Romano-Britons of the villa-owning class may have married the daughters of barbarian chieftains in the late 4th century. There is of course plenty of documentary warrant for such happenings elsewhere in the Western Empire.

The other and even more striking site to which I should like to refer is Elmswell in Yorkshire. This also has been fully excavated by Dr Corder.¹⁰ It is of particular importance to us because it is in the northern or semi-Romanised portion of Britain with which in this discussion of *Brocavum* we are specially concerned. At Elmswell a very considerable number of sherds of hybrid Romano-British-Saxon types was found. These suggested to Mr Myres a mingling of native and Saxon traditions — or, as he puts it, "Romano-British women making pots in the Saxon manner for Saxon masters."

In view of such evidence, it is in no way surprising that a distinguished German philologist has recently invited attention to what he claims as important and conclusive indications that Celtic words and Celtic idioms made their way at a very early date into the language

⁹ See *The Roman Town and Villa of Great Casterton, Rutland*, ed. P. Corder, Nottingham Univ. publication, 1951.

¹⁰ See *A Roman and Saxon Site at Elmswell, E. Yorks.*, 1935-36 and 1937, by Anthony L. Congreve; *Excavations at Elmswell, East Yorkshire*, 1938, by P. Corder (Hull Museum publications).

of the Anglo-Saxon settlers.¹¹ For myself, I have long regarded the sudden and brilliant burgeoning of Anglian monumental art, in the 7th and following centuries, as due not only to the stimulus of Christianity imported from the Celtic west, but as being also, in no small degree, the result of the liberation of the inherited artistic instincts of a persistent Celtic population, long repressed by the heavy and dull, mass-produced, uniformitarian material culture of the Roman Empire. Indeed I would go so far as to suggest that we should seek the real cultural watershed, or dividing line, in northern England in the early Middle Ages, not at the departure of the Roman garrisons *circa* A.D. 400, but rather at the Danish Conquest in the 9th century.

These, however, are much larger subjects than can properly be discussed in our present little study of Brougham. What is important is that we should realise the wide context in which we must consider the evidence, now available at this site, of a persisting population throughout Romano-British, sub-Roman and early Anglian times.

Where the population thus endured, thither in due course came the Christian missionary. It is therefore no accident that part of our evidence for a continuing community at *Brocavum* in sub-Roman times should be the indication that the place was touched by the Ninianic mission from *Candida Casa* into Cumbria. In the old Roman province, as in independent Pictland, there is proof that the early missionaries used, as naturally they would use, the imperial road system. The Stainmore road was an obvious route for the evangelists from *Candida Casa*; and Brougham, with its sub-Roman population continuing to dwell within the purlieu of the abandoned fort, was equally an obvious place for them to plant a church or preaching station. The evidence for

¹¹ W. Preusler, "Keltischer Einfluss im Englischen" in *Revue des Langues vivantes* xxii 322-350.

in 1956, of a Celtic cross of early type. Now on the adjoining mainland, at a place called Ireland, there was formerly an important church, which had a round tower, a sign of Norman or pre-Norman date. To-day Ireland is a fertile tract, supporting a prosperous crofting community. Here, we may infer with confidence, has always been the local centre of population.

So far back as 1876¹⁵ the distinguished Shetland antiquary, Gilbert Goudie, with rare prescience called attention to the resemblance between this twofold establishment on Dunrossness, associated with St. Ninian, and the parent foundation at Whithorn.

Finally, I may be allowed to call attention to the remarkable site which I am myself investigating at Dundarg, a rocky headland thrust forth into the Moray Firth, west of Fraserburgh, in the parish of Aberdour. Here we have to deal with a promontory fort, inhabited apparently about the 2nd or 3rd century by a people whose material equipment has affinities with that of the broch builders on the opposite shore of the Firth. Dundarg, we can hardly doubt, is the *cathair* or fortified place in Aberdour which, as recorded in the *Book of Deer*, was handed over by the local Pictish chief to St. Drostan, the apostle of Buchan, in order to provide, as in many similar cases, the *clausura* for a monastery. Soon, however, Drostan and his monks moved inland to Deer; but the entries in the *Book of Deer* make it evident that the *cathair* at Aberdour was maintained as a subordinate cell. Now the spade has revealed what has very appearance of being a small Celtic oratory, built of stones laid in clay after the fashion of the oldest Irish masonry churches; also of a two-roomed tenement which forcibly recalls the *domunculae* in another Celtic monastic site, the Brough of Deerness in Orkney;¹⁶ as well as those recently discovered at the Saxon monastery of Whitby — of course,

¹⁵ See *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.* xii 22; also Goudie's *Antiquities of Shetland* 30-35.

¹⁶ *R.C.A.M. Orkney* 240.

another Celtic foundation.¹⁷ Later, Dundarg became the seat of a medieval castle, destroyed, rebuilt and again destroyed in the Scottish Wars of Independence; but with these more recent chapters in the history of a highly complex site we are not here concerned.

A mile further west from Dundarg, overlooking Aberdour Bay, is the ancient parish church of Aberdour, long abandoned and in ruins. Here in this sheltered, kindly alcove was doubtless the early centre of population. The church retains some Norman work, but the facts that it bears the name of St. Drostan, while hard by is St. Drostan's Well, associate it, surely, with the Celtic foundation. Once more, therefore, we can hardly fail to recognise the twofold base of a Celtic missionary enterprise: on a site remote and apart, the monastic *clausura*; and the preaching station placed where convenient to serve the local community.¹⁸

I cannot believe that all the foregoing are mere coincidences. Surely they must represent a type, and I am convinced that the type harks back to the mother-church of the Celtic west, St. Martin's *Magnum Monasterium* at Tours. But let us please remember that at Brougham we are dealing as yet with no more than intriguing probabilities. I greatly hope that some day soon the caves at Isis Parlis will be thoroughly investigated. Certainly I can imagine no task more appropriate to be undertaken by our Society.

Eventual Anglian dominance over the sub-Roman, Celtic community at Brougham is signposted by the rededication of the church, some time after 709, to the great Northumbrian Saint, Wilfrid of Ripon. Nevertheless, we may accept, as proof of the continued persistence of a non-Anglian substratum at Brougham, the fact that the older association of the place with St. Ninian remained

¹⁷ *Archæologia* lxxxix 27-88.

¹⁸ See my *Dundarg Castle* (Aberdeen University Studies, no. 131).

met his enemies in battle, so we are told, *in finibus*, that is to say, somewhere near the Borders. For myself, I have never doubted the correctness of the identification of Brunanburh or Brunswerc with Burnswark; and so I like to think of Eamont Bridge, and therefore of Brougham, as witnessing the march past of the hosts that gathered for the mighty conflict which has been celebrated in the noblest of old English war-songs:

“Never had huger slaughter of heroes
 Slain by the sword-edge, such as old writers
 Have writ of in histories,
 Happed in this isle, since up from the East hither
 Saxon and Angle from over the broad billow
 Broke into Britain with haughty war-workers who
 Harried the Welshman, when Earls that were lured by the
 Hunger of glory gat hold of the land.”

Upon their north-west frontier the Norman and Angevin kings of England had to face the same danger that had confronted Athelstan the Saxon. Under the powerful and aggressive rule of the Kings of the Canmore dynasty, Scotland made repeated attempts to absorb the southern half of the old Celtic realm of Strathclyde. Once again, therefore, the Stainmore road became the arterial approach to the western end of a contested frontier, and thereby acquired a strategic importance which it had not known since Roman times. Hence the chain of castles with which, as Professor Richmond notes in the quotation that heads this inquiry, the ancient road was secured by the Norman kings. Four of these castles — Bowes, Brough, Brougham and Carlisle — occupy the very sites of Roman forts. At two of them, Appleby and Carlisle, a borough — that is to say a garrison of soldier-burgesses — was planted in dependence on the castle; and both of these royal boroughs remain to-day as remarkable and instructive examples of Norman town-planning.²⁵ At Brough likewise, the sketch-plan of a borough appears to

²⁵ For the Norman town-plan of Appleby see CW2 xlix 118-133.

have been laid out, but apparently naught in the end came of the project.²⁶ But at Brougham, though the site would seem to have been eminently suited for such a plantation, nothing of the kind seems ever to have been considered. We may conjecture that Penrith, a place of importance since pre-Norman times, was regarded as the local nucleus of population.

Of all this chain of Norman castles, strung out along the old Roman road, Brougham is beyond doubt the most interesting and the most beautiful. And it has been fortunate, too, in the attention which it has evoked from specialists. The four formal descriptions, by G. T. Clark, E. Towny Whyte, J. F. Curwen, and the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments,²⁷ leave little indeed to be desired. In an analysis of the castle contributed to our *Transactions*,²⁸ I showed that the gatehouse, a complex structure which reached its present form by three main stages, represents an extremely ingenious variant of the "keep-gatehouse" theme that dominates the English castle in the early 14th century. A few further notes, based on continued study, may be added in the present paper.

The practical difficulty in the keep-gatehouse theme was that, since the first floor had to be a fighting deck, on which the drawbridge, portcullises, *meurtrières*, and other defensive apparatus were worked, the hall had to be relegated to the *second* floor. At Brougham this difficulty was overcome by the ingenious device of two gatehouses. This enabled the lord's hall, in the Norman Tower, and the *camera*, in the rear gatehouse, both to be retained on the first floor, thus avoiding the inconvenient "skying" of the principal living rooms. Nevertheless, it did not entirely overcome the inherent inconvenience of the keep-gatehouse scheme; for the portcullis of the rear-gatehouse had to be operated from the *camera*. Thus the

²⁶ CW2 xlvi 229-232.

²⁷ G. T. Clark, *Mediæval Military Architecture* I 286-304 (originally published in CW1 vi 15-26; E. T. Whyte in *Archæologia* lviii (pt. 2) 359-382; J. F. Curwen in CW2 xxii 143-157; *RCHM Westmorland* 57-62.

²⁸ CW2 xlii 171-179.

tour-de-force, though ingenious, fell short of complete success. Hence, doubtless, the substitution of the later domestic buildings.

From its small size, the late 14th-century hall is obviously no longer the traditional *aula* or common living-room of the establishment. Rather it is a dining-room meant for the private use of the lord and his *familia* or personal household. For their comfort it is connected, by a corridor specially built, with his private suite on the first floor of the keep and rear-gatehouse. Presumably the standing garrison will have messed in their hall on the first floor of the fore-gatehouse.

The narrow slits in the basement of the keep show that this room was merely a store, though the garderobe indicates that it could serve as a prison when required — like the cellars under the hall at Brough. By contrast, the basement of the Tower of League is fully fitted up as a good living-room, with fireplace, seated window and garderobe. Apart from the porter's lodge, this room is in fact the only living apartment on the ground floor throughout the Castle, so far as it is preserved. Indeed the entire Tower of League is designed for residential purposes. The rooms are suited for persons of quality, and the sequestered and private position of the tower suggests that they may have been guest chambers.

The inner gatehouse, the Tower of League, and the top storey of the keep, were all built at the same time and by the same hand, as would seem from their intimate architectural connexion. All these works have the same angle fireplaces; in all three the garderobes are housed in external buttresses, and are approached by mural passages of unusual length, doubtless with a view to avoiding nuisance.

The lodging next to the chapel on the west looks like a second or mess-hall, such as is found at Bodiam, Llanstephan, Llawhaden, and Tantallon. No doubt the picked retainers of the lord's personal retinue would use the hall

in the fore-gatehouse, while the mess-hall next to the chapel would accommodate the general body of jackmen. This provision suggests that the Castle in its final form was intended to house, at times, a sizeable garrison. We are reminded of a document dated at Brougham Castle on 10 July 1369, whereby Lord Clifford took into his service a professional mercenary soldier, Richard the Fleming, and his company of *lanzknechts*.²⁹

An interesting episode in the later history of Brougham Castle is the residence there, in 1332-3, of Edward Balliol, King of Scotland by nomination of Edward III of England, after his expulsion by the Scots on 16 December 1332. His sojourn at Brougham is described in the Lanercost Chronicle:

“The King [Edward Balliol] therefore came to Carlisle, and there kept his Christmas in the house of the Minorite Friars, receiving money and gifts and presents which were sent to him both from the country and the town; for the community greatly loved him because of the mighty confusion he caused among the Scots when he entered their land, although that confusion had now befallen himself.

“At the Feast of St. Stephen Protomartyr [26 December] the King departed from Carlisle into Westmorland, where he was honourably received, and he stayed with my lord de Clifford at his expense, to whom he granted Douglasdale in Scotland (which formerly had been granted to his grandfather in the time of the illustrious King Edward the son of Henry) provided that God should vouchsafe him prosperity and restoration to his kingdom.”³⁰

Concerning this entertainment of Edward Balliol by Lord Clifford at Brougham the latter's descendant, Anne Countess of Pembroke has an interesting tale to tell:

“This summer [1658] by some few mischievous people secretly in the night, was there broken off and taken downe from thatt Tree near the Paile of Whinfield Park (which, for that cause was called the *Hart's Horne Tree*) one of those old Hartes Hornes which (as is mentioned in the Summerie of my Ancestor's Robert Lord Clifford's life) was sett up in the year 1333 att a

²⁹ *D.N.B.* xi 74.

³⁰ *Chronicle of Lanercost*, tr. Sir Herbert Maxwell, 275-276.

generall huntinge when Edward Ballioll, then King of Scottes, came into England by permission of King Edward the third, and lay for a while in the said Robert Lord Clifford's castle in Westmoreland, where the said King hunted a great Stag which was killed nere the sayd Oake Tree. In memory wherof the Hornes were nayled upp in it, growing as it were naturally in the Tree, and have remayned there ever since, till thatt in the year 1648, one of those Hornes was broken downe by some of the Army, and the other was broken downe (as aforesaid) this year. So, as now, there is no part thereof remayning, the Tree itselfe being now so decayed, and the Barke of it so peeled off that it cannot last long. Whereby wee may see that tyme brings to forgettfulness many memorable things in this world, bee they never soe carefully preserved, ffor this Tree, with the Hartes horne in it, was a Thing of much note in these parts."³¹

Since it is known that the hospitality afforded by Lord Clifford to Edward Balliol exposed his estates to the hostile attentions of the Scots, it is by no means impossible that some of the strengthening measures applied to Brougham Castle in the early 14th century were carried out as a result of this episode. Equally it is possible that some of the improvements in its domestic accommodation, assignable to about the same period, may have been made for the convenience of one who was received as a royal guest.

From the Muster of Westmorland, 14 February 1581, we obtain the following interesting list of the men to be furnished by the manor of Brougham:

"BROWHAME — Thomas Hanham [?] in ward shipe. — Thomas Ansome, 'gentleman', John Smythe, Nicolas Knotte, Jeffrey Huher, William Ansome, William Moure — '6 furnysshed with nagges and bowes': Renault Gibsoune, Henrie Ansoune, Stephen Measoune, Gilbert Browhame, Thomas Dodde, Robert Harrisoune, Thomas Lowdin, Eglamore Rumney, Thomas Birde, John Doubsoune, Richard Wiber, Robert Dawes, Dawes, John Smithe — '16 footemen withe billis'."³²

In his famous remodelling of Kenilworth Castle, in preparation for Queen Elizabeth's visit, it is noteworthy

³¹ See G. C. Williamson, *Lady Anne Clifford* 10; and, for the subsequent fortunes of the Hart's Horn Tree, *ibid.* 10-11.

³² *Cal. Border Papers* i 64.

that the Earl of Leicester retained in full use the great Norman keep, slapping out large Tudor windows in its mossy walls. His contemporary, Sir Christopher Hatton, did the same thing with his keep at Corfe. Clearly then there was no question of the Norman keep being considered as an out-of-date feature in the Elizabethan reorganisation of both these castles. But what purpose was it intended to serve in the new dispensation? In the next century, we find Lady Anne Clifford doing precisely the same thing when restoring her Castles of Brough and Brougham: and from her own narrative we learn that in both she made the old Norman keep her own residence. I have no doubt that at Kenilworth Lord Leicester did likewise. In all these cases, I feel that we must seek the explanation in a spirit of deliberate antiquarianism, fostered by that pride in her past which was so marked a characteristic of Elizabeth and Stuart England, and finds perhaps its noblest expression in Shakespeare's historical plays. Even if gutted and refitted in Tudor fashion, a Norman keep remained a thing poles asunder from 16th and 17th-century ideas of house-planning. Yet, in the cases under review, it connected the present owners with a historic past upon which clearly they set much value. And, if as may well have been the case, Lord Leicester did indeed believe that his keep at Kenilworth was "Caesar's Tower", built by the Roman Conqueror of Britain,³³ then surely he was anxious to preserve, as the leading feature of the Castle he was so sumptuously rehabilitating, a building that linked Imperial Rome with the new Imperial Britain over which his royal mistress

³³ Readers of Shakespeare will not forget that the Tower of London, like the keep at Kenilworth, was ascribed to Julius Caesar, see *Richard III*, Act III, Scene 1, 68—

Prince I do not like the Tower, of any place.

Did Julius Caesar build that place, my lord?

Buckingham He did, my gracious lord, begin that place

Which, since, succeeding ages have re-edified.

Also *Richard II*, Act V, Scene 2—

Queen This way the King will come, this is the way

To Julius Caesar's ill-erected tower.

presided with a splendour that outshone even the splendour of the mighty Julius himself. Doubtless just the same thoughts were present in the mind of the Countess Anne at Brough and Brougham. She knew that both castles occupied Roman sites; and, since she refers in each to its keep as the "Roman Tower", there is no reason to doubt that she verily believed them to be the work of Roman hands. With her keen sense of the past, and her pride in her historic properties, she approached the restoration of her castles in a spirit of conscious antiquarianism. "To raise up the foundations of many generations", in the scriptural phrase that she loved to carve on the walls of her restored castles, was her delight, and doubtless at Brough and Brougham she saw herself as the successor of Roman founders.

In 1658, just at the time when the good Countess Anne was thus busy in "building the old waste places", there appeared the first antiquarian book dealing exclusively with Roman Britain: William Burton's quaintly curious *Commentary on Antoninus his Itinerary, or Journies of the Romane Empire, so far as it concerneth Britain*. In his discussion of *Iter II*, he conflates *Bravoniacum* with *Brocavum*, and notes as follows: "At this day it is called *Brougham* in *Westmorland*, in which some reliques of the old name yet remain. Beside *Roman* Coyns here often digged up, it is taken notice of for an antient *Camp* or *Castra*: other Antiquities age itself hath consumed." This survival, in a greatly altered form, of the Roman place-name, where all else has seemingly perished, evidently took the old scholar's imagination. Elsewhere in his book he moralises:

"So that now whereas consuming *Time* hath wrought all its other usual despites upon it, according to that of the Poet:

*Aevum cuncta rapit, furtivaque tempora mutant
Naturam, sortem, nominaque et faciem.*

Age and incroaching time makes all things strange,
And doth their natures, names, and faces change—

yet doth its Name still survive, a happiness which but with a few other Stations this yet can boast of. But let it have been as great as it will, there onley remains now the shadow of a Name. And there will be a time when that too shall expire: however, if that be any comfort, it will be the last thing left.”³⁴

Fortunately, the modern science of archæology enables us to avoid this melancholy forecast. Beneath the green sods of *Brocavum* and in the dank caves of Isis Parlis, much doubtless remains that age hath not yet consumed. As a locality which illustrates, in unrivalled fashion, what elsewhere I have ventured to call the majestic continuity of British history, no site, I am sure, would better repay systematic exploration with the spade.

³⁴ Burton, *Antoninus his Itinerary* 119, 134.