

ART. XVII. — *Joseph Parker, the antiquary (1804-1877)*. By ERIC BIRLEY, F.B.A.

Read at Temple Sowerby, July 8th, 1977.

SOME years ago I had occasion to refer to Joseph Parker of Brampton, an antiquary who was one of Collingwood Bruce's sources for the Roman antiquities of that district (CW2 lxiii 154); it seems worth while to set down the evidence which I have been able to collect about him and his various interests.

The earliest unequivocal references belong to 1859, the year of the Archaeological Institute's first Carlisle meeting. The *Catalogue of the Archaeological Museum* (printed as a record of the special collection which had been got together in Carlisle on that occasion) at p.17 records "Mr Joseph Parker, Brampton" as the exhibitor of the following specimens:

A portable brass dial, or "Journey-ring", found on Brampton Moat, a convenient instrument in vogue in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for ascertaining the hour; an iron spear-head, a relic of Otterburn; a silver betrothal ring with hands conjoined, and the inscription AVE MARIA, found near the church at Brampton, Cumberland;¹ and a pistol, found in 1746 in a district called Coan Wood near Fetherstone Castle, Cumberland [*sic*], a relic of the '45.

There is nothing in this list to imply more than a general interest in bygones, but the *Proceedings* of the Institute's meeting include the record, under 28 July 1859 (AJ xvi 375), when Birdoswald was visited, that

Some new and interesting facts were brought to light, especially an arrangement which, as was sagaciously pointed out by Mr Parker of Brampton, appeared to have served for filtering and purifying water within the area of the Station by means of a thick stratum of charcoal and sand.

There is a fuller account in Bruce's *Wallet-book* (1863), p. 182,² where the excavations made at Birdoswald during the Institute's Carlisle meeting are mentioned:

The remains of a tank or reservoir for supplying the station with water were found. Some arrangements for filtering the water, by making it pass through a wall of charcoal, were noticed. Shortly after this, Mr Parker, of Brampton, discovered that this cistern was fed by a spring on the west side of the station. The watercourse conducting the water to the tank was formed of flat stones set up on end, covered over by a third on top; the whole was sunk in the ground. The writer was shown it at a distance of about 300 yards from the station; the water was then flowing in it.

Bruce must have made Parker's acquaintance several years earlier, perhaps during the original Pilgrimage in 1849, for the list of subscribers to the first edition of his *The Roman Wall* (1851) includes "Mr Joseph Parker, Brampton"; and that he was already in correspondence with Bruce before the Carlisle meeting is shown in the brief report of the Newcastle Antiquaries' meeting of 6 July 1859 (AA2 iv 144), when

Dr Bruce called attention to two newly discovered Roman inscriptions on Coome Crag, and at Baules [*sic* — read Banks] Burn, of which drawings had been sent by Mr J. Parker of Brampton.

The correspondence certainly continued. Many years ago now I came across a letter from Parker to Bruce, dated 28 October 1862, inserted in the working copy of the second

edition of *The Roman Wall* (1853), now in the University Library in Durham, into which Bruce collected much material for possible inclusion in his third edition, ultimately published in 1867;³ the letter deserves quotation in full:

In draining a piece of new burying ground which has been laid to Brampton old church the men cut across a ditch ten feet wide and six feet deep out of which they got several pieces of the coarser kinds of Roman pottery and a small coin of Posthumus [*sic*] in good preservation. They likewise cut through a paved road which runs parallel with the ditch and is eight feet from it. The road is about 12 feet wide and about from 12 to 16 inches below the surface.

This information is doubly important: in it we have the first indubitable evidence for the Roman fort at Old Church, which was only rediscovered in 1935,⁴ and the coin of Postumus shows that its occupation did not end when Hadrian's Wall was built, as the excavations of 1935 had been taken to suggest. Bruce made prompt, though inadequate, use of Parker's information in his *Wallet-book* (1863), p. 204:

About a mile and a half west of Brampton is the old church of Brampton, of which only the chancel remains. It is composed of Roman stones. In some recent excavations (1863), traces of a Roman road have been found, and some coins and pottery.⁵

A chance reference, in the account of our Society's visit to Old Church on 28 August 1879 (CW1 iv 549), gives us a hint that the coin of Postumus had perhaps been found a year before Parker's letter was written, for "the late Joseph Parker" is cited as follows:

In 1861 the burial ground was closed by order of the Privy Council, but a new piece of ground was obtained close by, and the interior of the chancel was arranged as it stands at present. When that was done the east window was removed and a plain square sash window inserted, and the late Joseph Parker said that a fresco was discovered on the north wall.

August 1879, incidentally, gives us a *terminus ante quem* for Parker's death – the date of which until very recently had given me endless difficulty, but it has now been resolved through the good offices of our member Mr T. Patten: see below, p. 164.

It was also in 1862 that Parker obtained the inscribed fragment from Pike Hill, to which I devoted a short paper, already mentioned (CW2 lxiii 153-155): now RIB 1957, where it is wrongly assigned to Milecastle 52 at Bankshead.⁶ And it must have been in that general period that Parker gave Bruce a variety of information for incorporation in the third edition of *The Roman Wall* (1867):

(a) RW3 281: The Castlesteads altar of *coh. II Tungrorum, Lap. Sep.* no. 424 = RIB 1981, "was found, in the year 1818, in the Cambeck Water, a little south of the Wall. It is supposed to have fallen from the east bank of the rivulet, where a stone pedestal was found, on which apparently it had been placed. In the masonry of the pedestal a coin of the elder Faustina was detected." A footnote adds: "This information was supplied by Mr Parker, of Brampton, who had it from the mason employed."

(b) RW3 285: The much weathered altar of *coh. III Gallorum, Lap. Sep.* no. 427 = RIB 1979, had been found by Parker himself: "To the north of the village [*sc.* Beck], and in the bed of the streamlet which probably gives it its name, Mr Parker, of Brampton, recently discovered the altar . . . which is now in his possession. The altar seems to have fallen from a hill, by the water's edge, on the top of which are some slight traces of building". Here a footnote adds a delightful and intriguing piece of information: "Mr Parker was out with his otter hounds at the time that he made the discovery. It is seldom that a sportsman returns from the field so richly freighted." A slightly more precise bearing for this altar's findspot is given in *Lap. Sep.*: "in a stream at the foot of Kylesike Hill, distant about three-quarters of a mile, in a westerly direction, from Castlesteads."

John Horsley observed, in his *Britannia Romana* (1732), p. 269: "I enquired about the inscriptions said to have been upon *Leuge Cragge* near *Naworth*, but was told that they were now entirely defaced"; Bruce was able to offer a location, under *Lap. Sep.* no. 470:

The editor, upon enquiry, has been informed by Mr Parker, of Brampton, that the *Leuge Crag* of Horsley (the *Leage Crag* of some other writers) is a quarry now called *Lodges*, a little to the east of the *Low Row* railway station.⁷ It has been extensively wrought lately, so that any trace of antiquity which it may once have had is entirely removed.

Parker was evidently paying particular attention to Roman quarries and the inscriptions on them: RW3 81 gives a woodcut from a specially prepared new drawing of the *Gelt* texts (now RIB 1007-1015):

In order that the cliff might be accurately examined, a framework was erected in front of it. Dr Johnston, of Brampton, and Mr Joseph Parker, of the same place, rendered to the artist, Mr Mossman, the same kind assistance which they have often given to the author.⁸

In 1867, when the new rectory was being built at *Nether Denton*, and the interesting series of Roman finds was made, on which Canon Shipman (1831-1884) reported to our Society at its visit on 23 June 1868 (CW1 i 88),

Mr Parker, of Brampton, a well-known antiquarian inferred from the large quantity of broken vessels that it had been a place where bodies were burned previous to interment . . .

And, on the next page,

Mr Parker observes upon the *Maiden Way* which crosses the Roman road from *Carlisle*, and runs up the brow of the opposite hill, "Our camp may have had some office to fulfil with respect to that."

The implication is that Parker had been thinking constructively about the Roman road-system in that part of *Cumberland*; and the implication is shown to be well founded by a letter which he had written to Bruce from Brampton on 1 November 1859; it is inserted facing p. 254 of Bruce's working copy of RW2 (referred to above), and reads as follows:

Dear sir, I have recieved [*sic*] the Book on the Excavations at *Bremenium* for which I am Extreemly [*sic*] obliged.⁹ I have been at *Birdoswald* since you were here. Examining the ground north of the station as Mr *Ramshay* is *Draineing* [*sic*] it at *Presant* [*sic*] the *Drains* are but four feet Deep and at Right angles with the Road Laid Down in Mr *Maclaughlans* Map but I cannot find the Least Vestige of A Road ever Haveing [*sic*] been there. My Opinion is that the Road has gone from the first Mile Castle west of the station as the Ground there is High and Dry and in A Direct Line or nearly so with the Road which I have seen at the East side of the watch Hill at *Triermain* it was nearly Dark when I got to the Mile Castle or I would have Examined it *Thorouley* [*sic*] but I will do so the first opportunity and Let you Know the Result. I remain yours Truly Joseph Parker.

There is no evidence to show whether Parker ever followed the matter up on the ground,¹⁰ but there is much to be said for his suggestion that the *Maiden Way* (as the road to *Bewcastle* was styled by Bruce and his friends) ran through the Wall at *Milecastle 50* (*High House*), and not from the north gate of *Birdoswald* fort. That would explain the fact, noted without comment by F. G. Simpson and I. A. Richmond in their report on the excavation of the *Turf Wall* *milecastle 50*, that a roadway through its north gate was carried on northwards on a causeway which interrupted the ditch of the *Turf Wall*.¹¹ Parker's suggestion ought to be followed up by field-work, past *Triermain* towards the Roman signal-tower known as *Robin Hood's Butt*,¹² and southwards across

the Irthing gorge to Nether Denton; it seems to me probable that Parker had his observation of 1859 in mind when he claimed that the Maiden Way “runs up the brow of the opposite hill” from Nether Denton, that is to say towards High House.

Another indication of Parker’s interest in Roman roads is provided by a passing reference in Rome Hall’s paper on “Ancient remains in Geltsdale”, read to our Society in August 1882 (CW1 vi 480):

I have traced on the map [*facing p. 457*] the remains of a supposed Roman Way which the late Mr Joseph Parker of Brampton, who took a painstaking interest in the antiquities of this district, thought he had made out satisfactorily; leading over Greenley Cross through Geltsdale Middle from the neighbourhood of Moss-Hill and Hall Bank Gate.

* * * *

So far, so good. We have a Brampton man who was interested in a variety of antiquities, particularly Roman ones; who was one of Bruce’s main sources for finds at Birdoswald, Pike Hill, near Castlesteads, and in two or three different quarries; and who paid attention to tracing possible Roman roads. What is more, he kept otter-hounds. But for a long time I was faced with the problem of identifying him; for Mannix & Whellan’s 1847 *Directory*, p. 596 ff., gives two men called Joseph Parker in Brampton: one of them as a baker and also a joiner, of Low Cross Street, the other a tallow chandler of Front Street. Moreover the 1851 census returns, as Mr Roy Hudleston, F.S.A., had pointed out to me, show the latter Joseph Parker as being forty-three years old, born in Brampton and a bachelor;¹³ and they also register a Joseph Parker of Front Street, born at Ainstable, unmarried, aged twenty-three, and a grocer; but the baker and joiner of Low Cross Street does not appear.

Yet it is without question that he was the Joseph Parker the antiquary: the evidence has come to me in two stages, at widely separated intervals. In the first instance, Canon Kenneth Harper kindly consulted the Brampton parish register for me, and reported the burial on 29 December 1877 of Joseph Parker of Low Cross Street, aged 73; and quite recently Mr Patten has provided the decisive evidence, from the *Carlisle Journal* of 4 January 1878. Under *Deaths* there is a brief announcement:

Parker, at Brampton, on Christmas Day, after a long and painful illness, Joseph Parker, joiner and cabinet maker, aged 73 years. Much respected. The deceased was a distinguished archaeologist.

There is also an obituary notice, as follows:

The death of a Local Antiquarian. On the 29th inst., in Brampton Old Churchyard, were solemnly laid the mortal remains of the late Joseph Parker, master joiner and a distinguished local antiquary of the town. He was born on the 22nd of September 1804 and from his zeal in antiquarian researches became a great friend of the late Robert Bell of the Nook, Irthington,¹⁴ with whom he united in his defence of Severus’s claim to the building of the Roman Wall against the new theory advanced by Dr. Bruce in favour of the Emperor Hadrian. He was of a most amiable disposition and was ever ready to assist in the promotion of his favourite science of archaeology. His remarkable researches during the last forty years are mostly embodied in the history of the Roman Wall by Dr. Bruce, with whom he was always glad to communicate whenever fresh matters of interest were discovered. In politics Mr. Parker was an ardent Liberal and, by his express desire, the old Radical flag of 1832 formed his winding sheet.

Canon Harper’s extracts from the Brampton parish register allow us to add a little more to the record. Under *Marriages*, on 1 July 1804 John Parker of Hesket-in-the-

Forest was married to Jane Johnstone; and on 17 August 1806 Joseph, son of John Parker, joiner, and Jane his wife (late Johnstone), was baptized. The intervals between the parents' marriage and the son's birth, and between his birth and baptism, may be noted but cannot, on present evidence, be explained.

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Canon Harper's search showed that a Joseph Parker of Back Street was buried, aged 69, on 18 October 1875; and Mr Patten has been able to show that that was the tallow chandler, whose death was recorded in both the *Carlisle Journal* and the *Carlisle Patriot* of 22 October 1875; a tombstone in his memory and in that of his wife, who died in 1876, is to be seen in Brampton old churchyard. The Joseph Parker of Front Street who was buried, aged 48, on 26 January 1876 was without question the grocer from Ainstable of the 1851 census. The only problem which subsists is, where our Joseph Parker, the antiquary, was living when the 1851 census was held.

Appendix 1

Joseph Parker's will

Dr Harris and Mr Hudleston both kindly suggested that it would perhaps be worth while to examine Joseph Parker's will; thanks to the good offices of our member Mr B. C. Jones, I have been provided with a xerox copy of it, from the files of the Record Office in Carlisle. It is dated 29 August 1872, and was proved by the executors, James Blacklock Lee and Thomas Parker (the testator's nephew), on 12 November 1878.

His bequests included £50 each to his nephews Matthew Wilson and John Parker Wilson; all his household furniture, plate, linen and china to his niece Jane Parker, to whom he also bequeathed "All my dwellinghouses bakehouse and premises situate in Low Cross Street in Brampton aforesaid with their appurtenances now in the occupation of myself and George Little"; to his niece Mary Brown "All my dwellinghouse Blacksmiths Shop and premises situate at the Low End of the Back Street of Brampton". To his executors he left "All my public House known by the Name of the Blue Bell in the Front Street of Brampton aforesaid with the Dwellinghouse Yard Cottages Workshop outbuildings and premises thereto belonging and adjoining And also my dwellinghouse and premises in Chandlers Lane adjoining the last named premises", upon Trust "to sell and dispose of the same by public Auction or private Sale", the proceeds to form part of the general residue of his personal estate.

But to me the most interesting bequests were as follows: "all my Books to my Nephew Matthew Wilson"; to James Blacklock Lee "my Chinese set of chess Men and Board"; and "to the several parties, or Institutions, whose names, description, and addresses, I shall in writing set opposite the respective numbers or names thereof in a book kept therewith, all my collection of Coins, and Antiquarian relics which I have separately numbered or named." The altar, RIB 1979, soon found its way to Castlesteads: its proprietor, George John Johnson (1816-1896), was no doubt the person to whom Parker's book noted that it should be given; but the Pike Hill fragment, RIB 1957, came (through what channel I have not been able to discover) to the Tullie House collection. I have no idea what happened to the items exhibited at the Carlisle meeting of 1859, nor have I come upon any evidence for the collection of coins. It would be most welcome if the publication of the present paper should lead to the identification of some at least of the books which were left to Matthew Wilson – books which might help to throw light on Joseph Parker's evidently wide range of antiquarian interests; and the book in which he listed his whole collection of coins and antiquarian relics would be an even more important find, if it could be traced.

Appendix 2

Dr Johnstone of Brampton

Reference has been made above to the help which Dr Johnstone and Joseph Parker gave to David Mossman in the matter of the “written rock of Gelt” (as it is commonly styled), with Bruce’s remark that both men had often given him kind assistance. Bruce has two differing accounts of one discovery for which he was indebted to Johnstone: (a) RW₃ 267: “A few years ago when Dr. Johnston, of Brampton, was botanizing in this neighbourhood, he discovered, at the foot of the cliff, the inscription which is here shown” – namely, the forged text in the Coombe Crag quarry, now RIB 2379*, reading Faust(ino) et Ruf(ino) co(n)s(ulibus) and thus purporting to have been cut in A.D. 210; it was R. G. Collingwood who demonstrated that the lettering was un-Roman and modern (CW₂ xxx 120). (b) *Lap. Sep.* no. 410: the inscription “was discovered in the summer of 1859 by Mr. Johnstone, surgeon, of Brampton, who shortly afterwards conducted the writer to the spot.” Bruce’s first published reference to this text was in WB 186 f., where however he did not mention the source of his knowledge of it.

It may be worth noting that another forged inscription, cut on a natural rock-face by the side of Banks Burn, was also found in 1859, a drawing of it, too, being sent to Bruce by Joseph Parker (AA₂ iv 144, cited above, p. 161); that is RIB 2383*, likewise condemned as a forgery by R. G. Collingwood (CW₂ xxix 91): Bruce’s working copy of RW₂ has a note facing p. 263, that “Hugh Howard, joiner, who now keeps the inn at the Abbey Bridge, Lanercost, discovered the Banks Burn inscription.” I cannot help wondering whether Joseph Parker or Dr Johnstone had anything to do with the forgeries . . .

In view of the fact that Joseph Parker’s mother was a Johnstone, I was inclined to suspect that Dr Johnstone was a cousin of his, relationship being a key to their collaboration in antiquarian matters; but from the abstract of his will, dated 12 February 1890 and proved by his widow Amelia on 5 October 1892 (kindly furnished by Mr B. C. Jones), there seems to be no hint of any Parker connection.

Abbreviations employed:

AA ₂	<i>Archaeologia Aeliana</i> , 2nd series.
AJ	<i>Archaeological Journal</i> .
HB ₁₂	<i>Handbook to the Roman Wall</i> , 12th edition (1966).
<i>Lap. Sep.</i>	<i>Lapidarium Septentrionale</i> (1875)
RIB	<i>The Roman Inscriptions of Britain I</i> (1965).
RW ₂ , RW ₃	Collingwood Bruce, <i>The Roman Wall</i> , 2nd edition (1853) and 3rd edition, quarto issue (1867).

Notes and References

¹ Mr Patten has sent me the following extract from the *Carlisle Patriot* of 16 August 1856: “Ancient Ring found at Brampton. On Friday last, a massive silver finger ring was dug up by a person working in a garden belonging to Mr Peter Burn, gardener, Brampton. Encircling the ring externally is the inscription in Old English characters: “AVE MARIA” with the initial letters “I” and “T” separated by two hands clasping each other. This interesting relic of the times of our Edwards and Henries is in the possession of Mr. Joseph Parker, joiner, Brampton, who purchased it from the finder. One short month ago and it would have found its way, as a matter of course, to the cabinet of Robert Bell of the Nook.”

² Repeated in RW₃ 261.

³ Cf. CW₂ xlvi 51, note 20, for the library reference to the working copy, X913.42012.

⁴ CW₂ xxxvi 172-182.

- ⁵ A revised version, omitting mention of coins, appears in RW3 285: "The materials of which the church is composed have the appearance of Roman stones. In draining the ground recently added to the churchyard, traces of a Roman road and some Roman pottery were found. Probably a fort has stood here subsidiary to that at Walton House."
- ⁶ The same incorrect attribution has been repeated in R. P. Wright and E. J. Phillips, *Roman Inscribed and Sculptured Stones in Carlisle Museum* (1975), 38, no. 72.
- ⁷ Cf. RIB 1953 and 1954, citing a Gale MS. for inscriptions seen in 1694 "at the Lodge Crag quarry, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile north-east of Low Row Railway Station" [which no longer exists].
- ⁸ John Joseph Johnstone (1809-1892) was a surgeon, living in Back Street, Brampton (*Post Office Directory*, 1858, 121); cf. Appendix 2, above. David Mossman (1825-1901) was Bruce's artist, employed mainly in drawing inscriptions during the long drawn out preparation of the *Lapidarium Septentrionale*, which was completed in 1875.
- ⁹ This must refer to an overprint from AA2 i 69-85, in which Bruce reported on the excavations at High Rochester in 1855.
- ¹⁰ At least, Bruce took no notice of Parker's suggestion; cf. WB 185 ("the Maiden-way, which came up to the south rampart of Carvoran, seems to have proceeded northwards from this station") and RW3 264 ("The Maiden Way is not seen in the immediate vicinity of the northern precincts of the station, but when first met with it points to the centre of the north front of the camp").
- ¹¹ Cf. CW2 xxxvii 166 ff. and the plan reproduced in HB12 (1966), 173.
- ¹² CW2 xxxviii 198 f. and HB12 169 f.
- ¹³ He subsequently married Margaret Little, whose will was signed on 13 March 1876, a codicil being added on 28 March; she died on 13 October 1876, and the will was proved on 4 November by her executors, Eleanor Parker, widow, and Isaac Noble, provision dealer of Brampton.
- ¹⁴ Robert Bell (1788-1856) was a keen antiquary who proved of service to John Hodgson, Bruce, Mac Lauchlan and Roach Smith; his pamphlet of 1852, *The Roman Wall: An attempt to substantiate the claims of Severus to the authorship of the Roman Wall*, provided a convenient excuse for Bruce to bring out in 1853 a paper in reply, *Hadrian the builder of the Roman Wall*, including press notices of the first edition of his *The Roman Wall* and an advertisement of the forthcoming second edition. Bell, on whom I hope to write an account for a later volume of *Transactions*, also had what was evidently an important collection of Roman coins, found in the Irthington district.

