

## A ROMAN INSCRIPTION FROM WORTHING.<sup>1</sup>

By F. HAVERFIELD, M.A., F.S.A., Hon. F.S.A. Scot.

THE inscription which is the subject of the following notes was found in the spring of 1901 at West Worthing, in a piece of land adjoining Herschel Lodge, on the east side of The Avenue, three hundred yards or more from the high water line of the coast. A tree had to be planted here and in making the hole for the tree, some 6-ft. deep, the workmen found the inscribed stone along with other Roman remains, flue tiles, three or four bits of brick, a curved roof tile, some roof stones, many flints which seemed to belong to flint foundations, a quern and millstones, one bit of "Samian" ware and many sherds of a dark ware—remains, as it would seem, of a building or dwelling-house.

The inscribed stone is a slab of dark rough sandstone, some 40-in. high, 21-in. wide and 7-in. thick. It is a good deal broken and has lost its upper part by what appears to be an ancient fracture. It bears four lines of fairly uniform lettering,  $2\frac{3}{4}$  (occasionally 3) inches in height. It was, together with the quern and millstones, kindly presented to the Sussex Archæological Society by Mr. J. E. Saunders, on whose property it was discovered, and is now in the Lewes Castle museum.

The reading and interpretation are easy. The text is:

D I V I  
CONSTANT  
P II AVG  
F I L I O

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Mr. R. Garraway Rice, F.S.A., for a squeeze of the stone and for much information, and to Mr. J. C. Stenning, of Steel Cross House, Tunbridge Wells, for excellent photographs, from which the accompanying illustration has been prepared.

This is obviously the second half of an inscription to Constantine the Great. The full text, without abbreviations (as may be seen from the examples to be quoted below), was doubtless much as follows:

*Imperatorī Cæsari Flavio Valerio Constantino pio felici nobili Cæsari (or invicto Augusto), Divi Constanti pii Augusti filio.*

“To the Emperor Flavius Valerius Constantinus, pious, fortunate, noble Cæsar (or, unconquered Augustus), son of the Divine (that is, dead) Emperor Constantius.”

Constantine attained the rank of Cæsar in 306, when his father, Constantius Chlorus, died, and the rank of Augustus—at that date a higher rank than that of mere Cæsar—in 308. He died in 337. Our inscription was therefore erected sometime during these thirty years.

The discovery has two interests. In the first place it adds to our knowledge of the local antiquities of Worthing. Roman remains have been found there at several times and in several places. Burial urns with human bones and Samian fragments were unearthed in 1881 a little east of the town and near the railway at the Ladydell Nurseries, on the East Chesswood estate, and other burial urns are said to have been found in the neighbourhood when the railway was built. Coins, eighteen in number (Vespasian-Gratian), potsherds and animals' bones were found east of the town on the shore about 1847. Urns, Samian ware, glass, shoes and nails—very possibly a burial—have been found in Broadwater, on the inland or north side of Worthing. In the town itself tiles, bricks, *tesserae* and potsherds were found in June, 1900, when the Chapel Road, which leads from the Worthing railway station to the sea, was widened, and some of these have passed into the possession of the Worthing Corporation; tiles and *tesserae* are said also to have been found on the west side of Chapel Road when the foundations of the houses were dug out. Burials, with coins of Diocletian and Constantine, are recorded from Park Crescent, and,

finally, the remains described above have been found in West Worthing, about a mile west of Chapel Road.<sup>2</sup>

These remains do not prove that Worthing stands on the site of a Romano-British town or "station." But they prove that there was Romano-British occupation. The exact character of that occupation can hardly be decided till more remains have been discovered. But the facts now known seem to indicate a "villa," or two "villas," a mile apart. Such "villas" would be country houses or farms and we should expect to find near them some traces of the servants or labourers employed at them and some traces also of the graves in which master and man were alike buried. The existence of such "villas" fits in well with all that we know of the West Sussex littoral from Chichester to Brighton in Roman times. That littoral, as anyone can see to-day, is a favoured land of rich soil and salubrious air, open to the sunlight and sheltered from the north. It was thickly inhabited in the Roman period. We can trace more or less definite signs of houses—that is, "villas"—at Portslade, Lancing, Angmering, Littlehampton, Arundel, Avisford, near Walberton, and so forth.<sup>3</sup> Among these the "villa" or "villas" of Worthing take a natural and congenial place.

But a further question arises. The inscription which I have described above would naturally be called a milestone. It is true that it mentions no miles and probably mentioned none when complete. But it belongs to a class of stones which were set up by the roadside and which in the later Empire, and particularly in the western parts of it, frequently bore no definite indication of its use. Shall we consider the Worthing stone as a milestone? Then we must suppose that a road ran along the West Sussex coast from the Romano-British town at Chichester as far, at least, as Brighton and possibly as far as the fourth

<sup>2</sup> "S.A.C." Vol. I., p. 27; Vol. XXXII., p. 233; Vol. XXXIV., p. 218; "Archæological Journal," Vol. XLI., p. 172; Dixon's "Geology of Sussex" (Ed. 2), pp. 75, 89, 91; *Sussex Daily News*, June, 1900; information from Mr. Michell Whitley.

<sup>3</sup> I omit *Portus Adurni*, a fourth century fort often located at or near Shoreham. There is really no reason, as I have pointed out in a former volume of these "Collections," to put this fort here. The name Adur, which is the one argument for it, is a modern invention.

century fort at Pevensey (Anderida). Some such road has often been conjectured, but it has been traced along the north face of the Downs, some miles away from the coast, through or near Storrington, Steyning, Bramber, Edburton. Summing up the evidence fifteen years ago, I ventured to doubt the reality of such a road in Roman times.<sup>4</sup> It may be as well to review the evidence again in reference to a road passing south of the Downs, through or near Arundel, Worthing and Shoreham. On the one hand the number of Roman remains found along this line—especially as reinforced in late years by discoveries at Arundel<sup>5</sup> and Worthing—indicate a population large enough to utilise a road. Nor is it unnatural to assume that the fort at Pevensey had some communication with the land west of it. On the other hand, the rivers Arun, Adur, Ouse and Cuckmere, which break up the South Downs into four huge isolated masses, form very serious obstacles to traffic east and west. Camden noticed this long ago, and General Pitt Rivers maintained that the pre-Roman fortresses of Chanctonbury, Cissbury and the rest seem distributed with a view to this fact. Geographically, therefore, we should expect the various parts of the West Sussex coast to be comparatively disconnected, except perhaps by the way of the sea. Moreover, no real trace of a Roman road through this littoral has yet been discovered—neither any suitable piece of straight roadway like that of the Stane Street, which runs north-east from Chichester, nor ancient metalling in convenient spots, nor ancient boundaries nor names indicating an ancient line of road. Either we must suppose that our Worthing stone is the sole relic of an utterly vanished road or we must suppose, as others have done about similar “milestones,” that it is not a milestone at all, but a memorial slab.

At this point of the enquiry it may be appropriate to examine the other cases of similar inscriptions found in Britain and bearing the name of Constantine.

<sup>4</sup> Index Notes on Roman Sussex, “Archæological Review,” 1888, p. 440; “Archæological Journal,” Vol. XLVI., p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> “S.A.C.,” Vol. XL., p. 283; Remains in Lewes Museum and on the spot.

(1) St. Hilary, near Penzance. *Imp. Cæs. Flav. Val. Constantino pio nob. Cæs., Divi Constanti pii Aug. filio* ("Ephemeris," Vol. III., p. 318).<sup>6</sup> No Roman road has ever been found near Penzance, but Roman remains of the early fourth century are not uncommon in Cornwall.

(2) On the line of a Roman road near Cambridge. *Imp. Cæs. Flavi Constantino . . .* (the rest dubious). (C.I.L. vii. 1154).

(3) Kempsey on the Severn, near Worcester. . . . *Val. Constantino p. fe. invicto Aug.* (c. vii. 1157; "Victoria Hist. of Worcestershire," Vol. I., pp. 210, 213). A Roman road *may* have run through Kempsey, but the evidence for it is extremely slight.

(4) Ancaster, in Lincolnshire, found near the Roman road just outside the "station." *Imp. C. Fl. Val. Constantino p. f. inv. Aug., Divi Constanti pii Aug. filio* (c. vii. 1170).

(5) Brougham, Cumberland, a Roman fort past which runs a Roman road. *Imp. D. C. Val. Constantino pient. Aug.* (c. vii. 1176).

(6) North of Penrith, near the Roman road to Carlisle. . . . *Imp. C. Fl. Val. Constantino p. f. inv. Aug.* (c. vii. 1177).

(7) A mile south of Carlisle, near the Roman road. . . . *Fl. Val. Constant . . o Nob. Cæs.* ("Transactions of the Cumberland Archæological Society," Vol. XIII., p. 438.) The stone has at the other end an inscription of Carausius. Whether the inscription quoted belongs to Constantine the Great or his father Constantius Chlorus is doubtful.

<sup>6</sup> I have lately been able to examine this much-disputed stone, in company with my friend Mr. J. G. C. Anderson, and I think the reading adopted above may be taken as certain. The formula is exactly the same as that of Nos. 8 and 10; it recurs (sometimes with an addition in respect of parentage) on several Gaulish milestones, but is rare elsewhere in the Empire. A peculiarity in it is the combination of the prefix *Imperator Cæsar*, usually reserved for "Augusti," with a *nobilissimus Cæsar* after. This seems to be significant of the position of Constantine at the time (A.D. 306-8), when he had been "acclaimed" by his soldiers, but had not yet had the title "Augustus" properly conferred upon him (C.I.L. xiii. 5556).

(8) On the Roman wall near Thirlwall. *Imp. Cæs. Flav. Val. Constantino pio nob. Cæsar[i], Di[vi Constanti, &c.* (c. vii. 1188; "Sculptured and Inscribed Stones in Durham Cathedral Library," p. 39).

(9) Near the Roman wall, on the Stanegate, a Roman road. *Imp. . . . Val Constantino p. f. inv. Aug. Divi [Constanti, &c.* ("Ephemeris," Vol. VII., p. 1111).

(10) Same place as No. 9. *Imp. Cæs. Flav. Val. Constantino pio f. nob. Cæsari, Divi Constanti pii Aug. filio* ("Ephemeris," Vol. VII., p. 1112; Dessau, 682).

Of the ten inscriptions eight may reasonably be called milestones. They do not necessarily imply road-making or even road-repairs, for Roman milestones were often cut afresh for fresh Emperors with no more reason than the fact that there was a fresh Emperor—much as E.R. is now substituted for V.R. on English Government property, without any special renovation of objects thus reinscribed. But they are concerned with roads, and as the great majority of them fall into the class "milestone," the presumption is that the Penzance and Kempsey instances, and with them also the new instance from Worthing, are also milestones.

A counter-presumption may seem to be suggested by the shapes of the stones. These shapes vary. The Penzance, Kempsey and Worthing examples are flattish slabs. The Brougham example (No. 5) may be the same but is doubtful. The Penrith example (No. 6) is lost. The rest are either round columns, like ordinary milestones (Nos. 2, 7, 9, 10), or square blocks (4, 8). It might appear that as the slabs occur where roads are not known, the slabs are plainly not milestones, and this view has been held by many English and foreign writers. It is, however, uncertain what importance we should attach to the shapes of the late "milestones." In 1885 five milestones—among them our Nos. 9 and 10—were found lying together at Crindle Dykes Farm, Northumberland, on the Roman road called the Stanegate. Four of these are columns; the fifth, which must surely be a milestone



A ROMAN INSCRIPTION FROM WORTHING.





also, is a flattish slab. How difficult it is to decide in these cases may be exemplified by a practical example. The thirteenth volume of the "Corpus Inscriptionum" (No. 5,881) contains an inscription found in Southern France, which is identical in text with the Penzance and other instances quoted above. In the body of his work the editor hesitates to accept it as a milestone, because of its shape. In the index it is classed as a milestone. If the slabs were intended for dedications or honorary memorials, they are strangely rude and coarse. But, in default of direct evidence, it is well to hesitate before definitely calling them milestones.

Possibly we may go further. At the opening of the fourth century Britain was prosperous. Perhaps the island had suffered less than the continent from the disasters of the third century; perhaps its special connection with Constantius and Constantine helped it. That connection is doubtless the reason why we have so many stones of Constantine. But the distribution of the stones shows that the coasts and northern frontier of Britain were now effectively held, that the roads were in use and so forth.<sup>7</sup> And it is possible that we may connect our Worthing stone with one feature in this efficiency. It seems that Constantius or his son, soon after the recovery of Britain from Allectus (A.D. 297), erected the forts of the "Saxon Shore" along the coasts of Sussex, Kent and East Anglia. One of these forts was Pevensey, and it may have been accompanied by some attempt to make a proper road from Pevensey to Chichester. Such a road, constructed late in the history of the Empire, and necessarily used only for a brief space, might vanish more easily than the great early main roads of the province.<sup>8</sup> The high cultivation of the country traversed

<sup>7</sup> Similar "milestones" of much the same date, but with other Emperors' names, have been found at Tintagel (Emperor dubious); on the coast of South Wales (Maximian, Diocletian) and on the Roman Wall (Maximian, Diocletian), &c.

<sup>8</sup> The above theory would suit the examples from Penzance and Tintagel (see last note), as the development of Cornwall did not take place till the fourth century ("Proc. of Soc. of Antiquaries of London," Vol. XVIII. p. 117). But I do not know of any special circumstance which would make it suit the Kempsey example. There, however, the other evidence for the road is slightly less deficient than at Penzance and Worthing.



would aid the disappearance of all vestige of the actual road. We have occasionally to assume such disappearances in attempting to re-construct the road-map of Roman-Britain. But they are disquieting features and are not to be lightly admitted. And, indeed, despite these possibilities the sober student will not admit, till further evidence emerges, that a Roman road has been proved to run through Worthing.

---