

No. XXIII.—*Account of the Discovery of some Roman Relics in the Western Suburbs of Pons Ælii.*—Communicated by Mr. GEO. B. RICHARDSON.

ON the morning of December 30, 1843, as the workmen of Mr. Amor Spoor were engaged in the demolition of White Friar Tower, part of the town walls of Newcastle, which was situate near the foot of South Street, and overlooking the river Tyne, they found at about ten or eleven feet below the surface of the floor, and immediately under it, the bed of an old water-course, which has, in former times, run down the side of the hill to the river. Lying in its bed was found (with a quantity of Roman roofing tiles, &c.) an altar, almost wholly shorn of its inscription; but, fortunately, the part bearing the name of the deity, has been spared. The altar (which is sixteen inches in height) has been well carved in a reddish sandstone.

In digging, the top of the altar was accidentally broken off; but the other defects are coeval with the erection of the tower. It is evident that that it is dedicated to Silvanus, a god to whom dedications in the north of England and Scotland are rare: two having occurred in Cumberland; one in Scotland; and this is but the second which has been discovered in Northumberland. It is evident that until the period of the erection of the tower, some Roman building (the western suburbs of the station of Pons Ælii) had remained, and in order to form a more advantageous site, and to obtain a substantial foundation for the tower, the clay raised from the moat a little to the northward, together with the altar, bricks, tiles, &c., from the ruined dwellings have been thrown into the bed of the water-course for that purpose.

Where the erection was made, the direction of the water-course was easily discernible by the difference of the soil, fragments of coal, pottery, and other deposits washed into it.

It may also be mentioned, that about two years and a half ago, there was found, at a short distance from the wall on the inside, a British urn, in a coffin-shaped chamber, a few inches below the present surface; a circumstance which would lead us to conclude (what has been before advanced) that these banks had at least been a British residence, if not a fort, before the Roman occupation thereof, particularly as the military tactics of the latter generally led them to erect their stations on the sites occupied by their predecessors.

N. B. Another altar, of the same size but without any inscription, was found in the same place, on Tuesday morning, the 9th January, 1844.