

No. IV.—*Account of a Roman Inscription found lately in Risingham, and now in the Collection of the Society. In Letters from Mr. JOHN BELL and Mr. THOMAS HODGSON, to JOHN ADAMSON, Esq., F. S. A., &c., Secretary.*

FROM MR. BELL TO MR. ADAMSON.

Newcastle, January 8, 1845.

DEAR SIR,

IN the last week of November I received a letter from Mr Richard Shanks, of Risingham, giving me an account of his further discoveries made in the Roman Station, *Habitancum*, saying “in October, being anxious of having the southern entrance of the station cleared from the fallen stones and rubbish, I commenced taking a level in with the land outside the great wall of the station, when I found it (the wall) standing in some places two courses and in others three courses high, and on each side of the entrance most beautifully executed, and a large quantity of beautifully carved stones lying about seemingly to have fallen from the top of the gateway or tower, and amongst others, one with an inscription which if it had been whole I make no doubt would inform us when the Risingham Station was either built or some part of it repaired.” On the 10th of December, which was as soon after the receipt of Mr. Shank’s letter as I could, I went to Risingham, and found the outside of the southern entrance of the station in great part cleared out, and the half of an inscribed stone which had in all probability been above the gateway, lying broken in two pieces, and took a rubbing from it, of which, with two or three corrections made since, I am enabled to place a drawing on the Society’s table, *see* fig. 3, pl. 2. I also took a drawing of the outside of the entrance, fig. 1. pl. 2.; also of the carvings of the original walling stones of the station, which I have given in the accompanying drawing, fig. 2, pl. 2. The inscription the Members of

the Society, through Mr. Shanks' kind attention, had the pleasure of placing in their Collection on the 23rd of this month.

From the quantity of grass-covered rubbish, which is lying at the northern entrance into the station, I should say that the remains of the walls of the gateway will be found standing much higher, and to all likelihood a corresponding inscribed stone to that mentioned above, and to that described in Horsley's *Britannia Romana*, p. 237, pl. 129, fig. LXXXVIII, which had in all probability been above the western entrance of the station, and which is now at Trinity College, Cambridge, might be found.

JNO. BELL.

High Street, Gateshead, January, 1845.

FROM MR. HODGSON TO MR. ADAMSON,

Newcastle, April 30, 1845.

DEAR SIR,

SINCE the Anniversary of the Society, I have paid much attention to the large and interesting inscription on the slab of stone found in the latter end of last year, in making some excavations near the south gate of the station at Risingham, and afterwards generously presented to the Society, by Mr. Richard Shanks, the proprietor of the station. The stone is 6 feet long, and 3 feet 4 inches broad, and has sustained a slanting fracture across. The upper part of the stone is wanting, and with it part of the inscription. The inscription is contained within a large circular wreath much ornamented, and there has been a rudely carved human figure on each side. From what remains of these figures it is evident, that they have been intended for Mars and Victory, as exhibited on the finely cut stone (Horsley's Nor., LXXXVIII.), to which the stone now under notice bears a strong general resemblance.

The inscription is an important one, but difficult to decypher, not only from the unusual character of its phrases, but also from the fracture which has taken place, and the weather-worn state of many of the letters. A careful examination has, however, been made of it, and the copy of it has been brought to a state, which will admit of such an explanation being given as will yield all the useful information contained in it, and leave only one or two unimportant points in doubt.

On the first inspection of this inscription, I felt convinced, from the remains of NICO MAXI in the first line, ANTONINO in the second, and the erasure in the third, that it could have reference to no other parties than Severus, Caracalla, and Geta; and further inspection has only confirmed me in this opinion, for what follows ANTONINO I consider as only an awkward mode of expressing PIO, for RO in such a position can have no meaning. Now the titles assumed commonly by Severus were *Arabicus*, *Parthicus*, and *Adiabenicus Maximus*, and sometimes with *Maximus* after each. He certainly did assume also the title of *Britannicus*, but that was not till later; until in fact he had come to Britain and conquered in it. At the presumed date of this inscription he had not been a conqueror in Britain, and it is, therefore, my firm opinion that these letters are the remains of *Adiabenco Maximo*. I can find no record of the title of *Britannicus*, before the year 210. The lines which are wanting, I have no doubt, contained the names and titles of Severus, and the lines referring to Caracalla and Geta are so plain as to afford no ground for hesitation. Amongst the titles of Severus were, perhaps, the letters AVG. for *Augusto*; but the insertion of these letters after the COS. II. of Caracalla, and not after the COS. III. of Severus, makes me rather doubtful on that point, and inclines me to think that the letters AVG. after Caracalla's name should be read *Augustis*, though there is not a double α, as was usual in such cases; but, perhaps, the mark placed within the α might be intended for another α.

The important fact which we learn from these lines is, that this inscription must have been erected, and the restoration, announced by it, must have been effected, after the years when Severus had been Consul three times and Caracalla twice. Now the year, in which Caracalla was a second time Consul, was A. D. 205, when he was Consul along with Geta;

and as Caracalla was Consul for the third time, along with Geta for the second time, in 208, it necessarily follows, that this inscription must have been erected between 205 and 208. It consequently could not have been later than 207, and I trust, that I shall be able to shew that this year should be assumed as the date of its erection.

The chronology of the transactions in the reign of Severus is not certain, and the information very vague; but they are only the latter years of his reign that now concern us. Now we learn from Xiphilline, as quoted by Horsley, p. 56, that Severus died in this island, "three years after he undertook the British expedition". This expression Mr. Horsley, p. 57, argues, justly in my opinion, must be "understood with some latitude so as to take in part of the fourth year". As Severus died in the end of the year 210, or the beginning of 211,* we are thus carried back to 207, the year of the consulate of Aper and Maximus. Now it is worthy of remark, that this is the very year that Cassiodorus, writing in the sixth century, states was the year in which "Severus had his war in Britain, when to secure the provinces from the incursions of the barbarians he drew a wall from sea to sea."† This latter part may not be exactly correct, but it is remarkable, that this is the year, in which the inscription on the rock on the Gelt‡ (recording work done in that quarry in the consulate of Aper and Maximus,) affords strong proof, that the Romans were then working stones for the building of the wall, or at least "beginning to prepare stones for the wall" as Mr. Horsley states.|| Mr. Horsley enters at much length into the question, and, after quoting all the authorities, states it as his "opinion, that Severus came into Britain in the year 207 at the latest, and that after having prepared all things for the war in this year and 208, he marched to

* In the *Fasti Consulares* in Dr. W. Smith's new *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, the death of Severus is said to have taken place on the day before the nones of February, 211, answering to the 12th of February of our calendar.

† *Britannia Romana*, pp. 62, 63.

‡ *Cumber*. LXIV.

|| I find I have in making these quotations unwittingly trespassed upon the question respecting the building of the wall. On that question I do not wish to give an opinion. It is immaterial to my present object whether the wall was built or only repaired by Severus; all I want is to shew that 207 was a busy year, and I think this is clearly proved both by the inscription on the Gelt, and that which I am now examining. Before Severus advanced northwards, he would, as a mere matter of prudence, take care that his home defences were put into a proper state for use if needed.

the north, beat the Caledonians, and built his wall.”* From the quotations I have given, I think that two facts may be deduced, which may be considered as almost certain: *viz.* that 207 was the year in which Severus and his sons arrived in Britain, and that that year was one of great activity and preparation. Amongst those preparations, I entertain no doubt that the repairs or restorations recorded in this inscription should be included, and of this I trust I shall be able to produce further proof.

After the date, the most important point of the inscription is that which makes known the work, which was repaired, or rebuilt, from the ground. This we are distinctly told was, *Portam cum Muris Vetustate dilapsis*; that is, the gate with the walls which had fallen down from old age,—thus evidently shewing that such things had existed before. The gate here mentioned was no doubt that near which the stone was found; and there can be as little doubt that the original position of the stone was above the gate, either as a headstone, or built into the wall.

The remainder of the inscription discloses to us the names of the parties engaged in the restoration of the gate and walls, but, with one exception, is little further interesting, than as affording an exercise for antiquarian ingenuity. It certainly does so, for here the great difficulty of the explanation commences. The first phrase, after *dilapsis*, is one of most uncommon occurrence, indeed, I may say, unprecedented. I certainly never met with it before, and it has completely eluded my research. It is to be regretted, that the difficulty of the reading of the line is very considerably enhanced by the imperfect state of the stone at this part; the word *IVSSV*, however, is too distinct to afford any room for doubt, that this line contains the name of the person by whose command, or order, the repairs were made. Whoever he was, it is evident that he must have been an officer of no ordinary rank, especially as two other persons, each men of considerable rank, are named after him, and as if under his command. I very much regret that his name cannot be distinctly made out, for a piece of stone is here wanting, and the letters not very distinct. But sufficient remains to convince me, that this person could have been no other than L. Alfenus Senecio,

* *Britannia Romana*, p. 62.

whose name occurs in an inscription found at Greta Bridge,* and also in another, said by Camden, to have been found at Burgh, near Bainbridge.† On the former of these stones he is described as Legatus under these Emperors. The o in his name is certainly wanting in our inscription, and some doubt, owing to the fracture, may be entertained respecting the LF after A in his nomen; but there is space enough for these letters, and what can be made out is so similar to the remains of such letters, as strongly to warrant the belief that the letters were originally LF. *Alfen. Senecinis*, too, is so near *Alfeni Senecionis*, that I feel no hesitation in expressing my belief, that the person issuing this command must have been the same person, who is so conspicuously announced on the stone at Greta Bridge, as *Legatus eorum, Propraetor*; for it is, I consider, much more improbable, that there should, at the same time, have been two persons bearing high office in Britain of names so very nearly alike, than that there should have been a mistake or an omission in a rough and a crowded inscription. That the personage named in our inscription was a person of high rank is rendered evident by the letters v. cos. after his name. These I consider should be read *Viri Consularis*‡—a man of Consular rank, for the small circle I look upon as only a point.

I know not whether what I have stated will be sufficient to satisfy you, that it is the same individual who is named in these several inscriptions, but for my part I entertain scarcely a doubt upon the subject. It is certainly to be regretted, that any doubt, however slight, should attach to this point, for if we could be certain, that the person here named was in reality the Legate, we should have the clearest proof that the year in which this inscription was set up was in truth the year 207; as the change of his title would make it evident, that at the time of its erection the Emperors had arrived in Britain, and by exercising in person both the military and

* In 1793.—See Gent. Mag. of that year.

† See Horsley, p. 313. Though he is named on this stone L. A. Senecio, there can be no doubt he is the same person; the dropping of the L. of the prænomen is of no importance. Another instance of it occurs in this inscription from Risingham.

‡ This reading would account sufficiently for his rank, but it leaves unexplained his office. Could I find any authority for the term, I should be inclined to read it, *Vice Consul*; but, though I have met with *Vice Praefecti*, &c., the term *Vice Consul*, or *Consul*, is unknown to me.

civil powers of the government, had rendered the office of Legate no longer necessary.

The next phrase of the inscription contains the name of the person under whose *care* and *providing* the repairs were made. The person, who discharged this duty of *Curans*, or *sub Curá* as occurs in many inscriptions, was generally an officer of rank, and the instances are many where this duty is expressly stated to have been discharged by the *Legatus Augustalis*, *Propraetor*, himself. In the present instance, however, there is no indication of his rank, and we can only infer, from the evident deligation of power, that he must have been a person of some station. His name is difficult to make out, but no doubt can be entertained that his last name was *Adventus*. The knowledge of this affords us material assistance in decyphering his preceding names, rendered obscure by abbreviation and ligatures. The name of *Adventus*, I found from my MS. Index, occurs in an inscription at Lanchester*; and on referring to it I was pleased to find, that his preceding name was there given at length, and that, as copied, it was *Antistius*, and further that he had attained the rank of *Legatus Augustalis*. I immediately came to the conclusion, that this must have been the same individual as is named in this Risingham inscription; for though he is described as *Legatus Augustalis*, it would appear from the dedication of the altar, on which the inscription occurs, NVM. AVG., that there was then only one Emperor reigning; and as it is most probable, that this Emperor was no other than Caracalla, we have strong assurance, that this altar refers to a few years later than the period of which we are treating, and that time enough would thus be afforded him to rise to the high rank of Legatus. The attainment of such a rank, in so short a time too, shews that at the time of the erection of this Risingham inscription, he must have been of no inconsiderable station.

There yet remains the prænomen to decypher. All trace of this is wanting in the Lanchester inscription, so that no assistance can be derived from it. This name is expressed on the Risingham stone by a compound letter followed by a small L. That compound letter always appeared to me to

* Hutchinson's History of Durham, Lanchester plate, fig. 17

stand for co. There is no middle arm to constitute it œ, as Mr. Trevelyan has suggested;* and it is so similar to the compound C. in the inscription (North. LXXXIX. in Horsley), found also in this station, and from the nature of it evidently of much the same date, that I have no hesitation in reading these letters col. A further presumption, in favour of the first letter of this name having been a c, may be derived from an inscription in Reinesius,† said to have been found near Utrecht (*Vetus Trajectum*); and assigned by the foreign antiquaries to the times of Severus and Caracalla. That inscription records the erection of an altar by *C. Antistius Adventus, Leg. Aug. Pr. Pr.* of that province. From the similarity of name, the rank, and the time, there can be no doubt, I think, that we here again meet with the same individual, and that his prænomen must be sought for amongst those which commence with c, and followed by ol. We are thus restricted to a very few. The only names that I can find in the Index to Gruter, applicable to our present purpose are, *Colchis, Colendus, Colinius, Colinus, Colius, Collagius, Collegius, Collio, Collicius, Colonius, Colonus, and Colutianus*. These, however, appear so much like nomina, that I know not which to think most probable, and I shall not attempt to make a choice.‡

The letters following *Advento* are an unusual combination and not easy to decypher; but after fully considering various conjectures, which have presented themselves to my mind, I can come to no other conclusion than that they should be read *pro Augustis nostris*; and that in this phrase we meet the declaration of the delegation of power by these Emperors, to both probably of the officers whose names occur before it. The single g in AVG. is certainly not quite suitable to such a reading; but the double n, immediately following, can mean nothing but the plural, and the g is of exactly the same character, as in the similar contraction preceeding, which

* I can find no trace of any name beginning with *Oel*.

† Rein. 244, p. 226. Orell. 1270.

‡ Mr. John Clayton has suggested *Collatinus* as probably the name of *Adventus*; and I was once inclined to it; but the absence of the second L. and the strong evidence afforded by the other inscriptions induced me to give it up. On investigation too, I found with regret, that this name, so familiar to us in our youth, seems to have completely slipped out of Roman history.

I have not hesitated to read *Augustis*. It too does not seem probable, that these officers would restrict the expression here to only one Emperor, whilst the inscription itself is dedicated to them both.

We have now at length reached that part of the inscription, which discloses the agents by whom the repairs were actually made. The letters here are indistinct and broken, but sufficient is evident to carry the conviction to my mind, after an examination of the inscription on the altar (Nor. LXXXI,*) found also at this station, that the letters which follow NN. express the words *Cohors prima Vangionum*, which we learn, as above, was stationed at this place. The meaning of the letters which follow I am utterly at a loss to conjecture, or how they should be read. I was in hopes of having been able to meet with the name of this Cohort, with some epithet after it; but I cannot find this cohort even mentioned in Gruter or Reinesius. I shall therefore leave them without an attempt to explain them, and I do so with little reluctance, for I do not consider them of much importance. The name of the Tribune, who commanded the Cohort at the time of the dedication of the altar, as we learn from the inscription on it, was L. Aemilius Salvianus. No one, I think, after inspecting our inscription can entertain a doubt that the name of this very Tribune is comprised in the letters which follow CVM in the last line but one. The L. is indeed dropped but that was not unusual. The ligature after the name of Salvianus, there can be no doubt is a contraction of the word *Tribuno*. The letters at the commencement of the last line, though the term be unusual, can admit of no other signification than *Suo*, the ablative case of *suus*, and must refer to the word *Cohors*. The remaining words present no difficulty and should unquestionably be read *a solo restituit*. The meaning of these lines will, in my opinion, thus be, that *the first Cohort of the Vangiones — together with Aemilius Salvianus its Tribune restored, or rebuilt, from the ground the gate and walls as above stated.*

Having thus in detail expressed an opinion on each phrase or passage of this inscription, I shall now proceed to give what I consider the most

* See *Britannia Romana*.

probably correct reading of it; premising, however, that the titles of Severus might be extended to a greater length, but the part of the stone, which is wanting, was, I think, sufficiently large to have contained the following names and titles—those wanting being put in different characters :—

IMPP. CAESS.

L. SEP. SEVERO PIO PERT. P. M.

ARAB. PARTH. ADIABENICO MAXI.

COS. III. ET M. AUREL. ANTONINO PIO

COS. II. AUG. ET P. SEPT. GETAE, NOB. CAES. COS.

PORTAM CUM MURIS VETUSTATE DI-

LAPSIS JUSSU ALFEN. SENECINIS Vº

COS. CURANTE COL. ANITI. ADVENTO PRO

AUG. NN. COH. I. VANGION. —

CUM AEMI. SALVIAN. TRIB.

SUO A SOLO RESTI.

Which may be thus explained at length :—

Imperatoribus Caesaribus

Lucio Septimio Severo Pio Pertinaci, Pontifici Maximo,

Arabico, Parthico, Adiabénico Maximo,

Consuli tertium, et Marco Aurelio Antonino Pio,

Consuli secundò, Augustis, et Publio Septimio Getae, nobilissimo Caesari,

Consuli,

Portam cum Muris Vetustate di-

lapsis, Jussu Alfeni Senecinis (Senecionis ?) Viri

Consularis, curante Antistio (or Anitistio) Advento, pro

Augustis nostris, Cohors prima Vangionum —

cum Aemilio Salviano, Tribuno

suo, a Solo restituit.

These remarks have extended to such a length that I must be brief in what I have further to state, but I cannot conclude without expressing it as my opinion, that this inscription throws a clear and satisfactory light on

the history of the station at Risingham. Two important conclusions, I think, may be deduced from it: first, that this station must have been coeval with the stations along the line of the wall; and second, that its ramparts were originally stone walls and not mere earth-works.

The number of inscriptions, which have been found in nearly all the stations on the Wall, and in others connected with it, recording the restoration of some temple or other building, which had fallen down from old age, *vetustate conlapsum*, is not a little remarkable; and as these inscriptions all belong, in point of time, to the early part of the third century—to the reigns in fact of Severus, Caracalla, Heliogabalus, and Alexander Severus, a space of about 30 years, we can come, I think, to no other conclusion, than that such a contemporaneous decay is a most striking proof of a contemporaneous origin. Now we have certain proof in this inscription, and also in Horsley's North. LXXXIX., that Risingham participated in this decay, and that too, at a very early period; we are, therefore, I think fully entitled to assume that its origin must have been as early as that of any of the others. The decision as to the date to which that origin should be carried back, will in a great measure depend on the construction put upon the term, *vetustate conlapsum*, or *dilapsis*—that is as to the time, which may be supposed to have elapsed before buildings or walls could be reduced to such a state of decay as to render it necessary to restore, or rebuild, them from the ground. Earlier than the time of Agricola, A. D. 79, they could not have been erected, and it has generally been considered as certain that these stations were erected by him, and that they were in fact the very *praesidia* and *castella*, with which he is said to have enclosed the Brigantes. But some have considered it probable that these were at first only earth works, and that they were afterwards faced with stone by Hadrian in 120. Now between the years 79 and 207, there intervenes a space of 128 years; but between 120 and 207 a space of only 87 years. Either of these spaces seems a very short period for buildings or walls to be reduced to such an extreme state of decay: but it must at once be admitted that every probability is in favour of the longer space of years. That is certainly my opinion; I can, therefore, come to no other conclusion than that the Walls here mentioned (*Muri*, stone walls) were originally erected by Agricola; and the probabi-

lity is great that this was also the case with all the other stations, and that they never were mere earth-works.

The opinion I have thus advanced may by some be considered as controverted by the supposition, for it in reality is nothing more, that this station was not in existence, or had been neglected or abandoned, at the time about which I am writing, because it is not mentioned in the First Iter of Antonine's *Itinerary*. But I consider that no conclusion can be drawn from the *Itinerary*, because we do not know the date of it. That the station had been long in existence is fully proved by this inscription, as also that in the joint reign of Severus and Caracalla it was considered of such importance as to be restored to an efficient state. If the *Itinerary* was, as some believe, drawn out by order of Caracalla, we must, therefore, seek some other reason for the omission of Habitanum in this Iter, than its abandonment in so very short a period of time. The omission of it also proves nothing, for Lanchester is likewise omitted in this same Iter, and that station we know was long occupied. The most probable reason for the omission I consider is that suggested by Horsley, that it was "too near to Riechester" (*Brit. Rom.* p. 397), to be named as another mansion on this route. Why should this station be abandoned more than Netherby and Middleby? If two advanced stations were maintained on that west road into Scotland, why should not two be considered equally necessary on this eastern road? I have never heard a suspicion advanced that Riechester and the other stations named were ever neglected or abandoned till the last, and I can see no reason why we should consider that the case was not the same with Risingham.

I have thus endeavoured to give you an account of this inscription, and to express my opinion on its signification; and in the hope that what I have stated may prove satisfactory,

I remain, Dear Sir,

Your's respectfully,

THOMAS HODGSON.