

THE NEWLY-DISCOVERED ROMAN STONE AT HEXHAM.

READ 26TH OCTOBER, 1881, BY DR. BRUCE.

THE idea has prevailed that the Roman stones which have been found at Hexham have been brought from Corbridge or some part of the Wall. This certainly is an error. Horsley in his "Britannia Romana" (p. 250) thus writes:—"These stones and inscriptions argue Hexham to have been a Roman station; for the plenty of freestone so near makes it improbable, that in their modern buildings (or those later than Roman) they would have fetched any stones either from the heart of the Roman Wall or from Corbridge."

At a meeting held by this Society at Hexham in August, 1860, I read a paper, one object of which was to prove that Hexham was a town of Roman origin. Amongst other considerations I mentioned, on the authority of the late Mr. Fairless, that when the ground was opened in the vicinity of the Manor Office a connected chain of earthenware pipes of Roman manufacture was lying *in situ*. A pipe or two not in position might have been brought from some other locality; these had evidently been placed where they were found by Roman hands for the conveyance of water.

Since Horsley's day, and even since the reading of the paper to which I have referred, some important altars have been found increasing the probability that the Romans had a post here.

And now another slab of great interest is to be added to the works of Roman art found at Hexham. It was discovered at the latter end of last month (19th September), by Mr. Charles Clement Hodges, when searching for a crypt which is said to exist under the chamber adjoining the south transept of the Priory Church. The slab was lying with its face upwards, and covered with mortar, about 2 feet below the floor. It had been used in laying the foundation of a

wall 3 feet 5 inches thick, which crossed the chamber at a distance of 7 feet from the west wall of the transept. The larger portion of the stone projected beyond the wall, and being insufficiently supported, had snapped across at the point of junction. The slab is about nine feet long and three feet and a-half wide; it averages one foot in thickness, and is supposed to weigh about two tons. The local masons say the stone is that of a neighbouring quarry—that of Brockley Burn. On lifting the stone, an operation which was not effected without difficulty, it was found to be elaborately carved on the upper side. The carving (which is shown in the accompanying woodcut) represents a cavalry officer riding rough-shod over a fallen foe. The officer has his side face towards the spectator. On his head is a helmet which is adorned with two flowing plumes; there has doubtless been a third, which is hid from view by the larger of the two that are represented. There is a torque round his neck. He holds a shield in his left hand; in his right he carries a standard, at the head of which is a radiated figure exhibiting, on close inspection, something like the appearance of a human head. It may be a mere ornament; or, if it be a head, it may be that of the Emperor or Apollo. The horseman has on a coat of mail, and by his right side hangs his sword. The horse, as usual, is small in comparison with the size of the man; the bridle and trappings are shown, but no stirrups are seen. The prostrate foe is crouching on the ground; his face fronts the spectator, and is well seen; he wears a beard, which the rider does not; his sword is in his right hand and is uplifted, but that part of the carving which should represent the end of it is broken off. On each side of the slab has been an ornamented column terminating in an elaborate capital, considerable portions of which remain. The upper part has been carefully decorated, but the efforts of the Roman artist have been to a great extent obliterated by the pick-axes of more recent workmen. The carving on the whole is well designed and is very effective; it has not, however, been so well finished as some other Roman works of art which have been found in the north. The stone bears an inscription which shows us that it has been a tombstone erected to the memory of a deceased soldier. The lower part of the stone is untouched with the chisel, inducing the belief that this part has been let into the ground; the back and sides of it, too, are rough, rendering it probable that it



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TVR CANDIDI AN XXV
STIP VII HS

has been inserted in a wall. It may have formed the front of a cippus in which were deposited the ashes of the young man. The following is the inscription:—

DIS MANIBVS FLAVINVS
EQ ALAE PETR SIGNIFER
TVR CANDIDI AN XXV
STIP VII H S.

which may be thus expanded:—*Dis Manibus. Flavinus eques alæ Petrianae, signifer turmae Candidi, annorum viginti quinque stipendiorum septem, hic sistus [est].* And may be thus translated:—“To the gods the shades. Flavinus, a horse-soldier of the cavalry regiment of Petriana, standard-bearer of the troop of Candidus, twenty-five years of age, having served seven years in the army, is here laid.”

The general style of the sculpture, together with the fact that the inscription contains a single ligature (IN in Flavinus), lead us to suppose that the slab belongs to the second century.

I need not remind the members of this Society that the horse regiments of the Roman army were called *alæ* or “wings,” because in the early times of the Roman republic the troops of horse formed the wings of an army when in battle array.

The Ala Petriana seems to have derived its name from the station Petriana, which was the station of the Roman Wall immediately west of AMBOGLANNA or Birdoswald.

We have previously met with traces of the Petriana regiment of cavalry. It is mentioned in the bronze diploma found at Stannington. We know, therefore, that it was in Britain in the time of Hadrian. A stone slab which was found at Carlisle in 1860 mentions it. It is there denominated *Ala Augusta Petriana torquata milliaria, civium Romanorum*, that is, “the Ala Petriana styled the imperial, adorned with the torque, a thousand strong, and Roman citizens.” An *ala*, or cavalry regiment, usually consisted of three hundred troops; this *ala* at the period when this stone was carved was unusually strong. It was also distinguished by permission to wear the torque. This was a ring of metal, gold, silver, or bronze, which encircled the neck as in the case of the famous sculpture, “The Dying Gladiator.” I may mention, that a bronze torque has recently been found in Carlisle, not far

from the spot where this stone was found, and has doubtless been worn by one of the *Ala Petriana torquata*. It is prettily chased. At the lower part of it is a section of the ring which is capable of being removed for the purpose of allowing the torque to be put on the neck, and which when replaced is held tightly in position by the elasticity of the ring.

We have another trace of the *Ala Petriana* in the mural region. It consists of a carving on the side of a limestone quarry in the neighbourhood of Lanercost Priory by a decurion of the regiment.

The only other record which we have of this body of troops in Britain occurs on a stone found at Old Carlisle, near Penrith. Camden describes it, but it has long been lost sight of.

It has generally been supposed that Castlesteads, near Brampton, is the *Petriana* which was the head-quarters of the *Ala Petriana*. As this camp has an area of only two acres and a-half, it must have been much too small to hold a cavalry regiment of the ordinary size—much more when it was a thousand strong. I think it must be sought for elsewhere.

The word *Signifer*, or standard-bearer, requires no explanation; the sculpture itself explains it. We have met with it twice before in inscriptions on the Wall.

We meet with *turma* for the first time. It signifies a troop of horse thirty strong. It would seem that each *turma* took the name of its commander, as each body of a hundred foot soldiers took the name of its centurion. The *turma*, to which our deceased friend belonged, was the *turma* or troop of Candidus.

Flavinus, to whose shades this stone is dedicated, had served in the army seven years. In these he had doubtless slaughtered numbers of the aboriginal inhabitants of Britain. He must have been a man of considerable importance to have commanded at his death a monument so important as the one before us. Happily many days have passed since the sounds of war were heard within our borders; may they never return.