



ON A NEWLY-DISCOVERED ROMAN INSCRIPTION AT  
CHESTER-LE-STREET.

READ 31ST MARCH, 1880, BY THE REV. R. E. HOOPPELL, M.A.,  
LL.D., D.C.L., F.R.A.S.

ON the 26th of last month (February 26th, 1880) I spent a night at Chester-le-Street, as the guest of our friend, the Rev. W. O. Blunt, who, I am glad to know, is present with us this evening, at the Parsonage House of that ancient parish. Being on the site of a Roman station, admirably described in our Transactions by the Rev. Walker Featherstonhaugh,<sup>1</sup> I naturally asked him if any relics of the Roman occupation of the station were met with still, from time to time. He at once told me they were, and showed me numerous fragments of pottery, Samian and other, which had been brought to him, and which he had preserved. Eagerly examining them for potters' stamps, of which we ultimately obtained five, and for graphitic characters, of which there was one very interesting example, I asked him whether any inscriptions on stones were ever found. He said one such was found in October last, in the course of the execution of some somewhat extensive sewerage works, and that he had purchased it from the workman who found it, and would show it me in the morning. This he kindly did. It was in the lower room of the deeply-interesting "Anchorage," or "Hermitage," at the church, and at my suggestion Mr. Blunt had it removed to the Parsonage, where I carefully examined it. A few days afterwards (March 2nd) I visited my friend again, and took a number of paper impressions of the inscription, and Mr. Blunt sent into the village for a photographer, by good fortune resident there, who took two negatives of the stone. Prints from these I now lay upon the table. Some of the paper impressions I immediately dispersed, with information of the discovery, to such friends and correspondents as I knew would take a lively interest in the subject.

<sup>1</sup> "Archæologia Æliana," quarto series, Vol., IV., p. 280.

The stone is unfortunately but a fragment, or rather two fragments, but these are adjacent fragments, and, together, yield us the right-hand end of what has been a very long and very important commemorative tablet. The breadth of the tablet is 24 inches; the breadth of the inscribed portion 18 inches. It seems reasonable to conclude, from various considerations, that the original length of the slab was very probably about four feet, and of the inscribed portion about three feet. If this conclusion be near the truth, we have but about one-fifth of the whole inscription. We have the ending of every line, but nothing beyond these endings to guide us to any conclusions respecting the character of the former four-fifths of each line. Yet patient investigation has elicited some information of interest from the stone, and it is possible that more may hereafter be obtained. I ought to state, at this point, that the whole of the portion of the second line which we have has been purposely erased.

Most of the letters are sufficiently easy to make out, but I doubted respecting some of them at first. I think, however, that I have correctly ascertained all of them now, and doubt not that the following reading will be accepted generally:—



· · · ·	E Q Q
· · · · ·	
· · · ·	ERRITQ
· · · ·	NDVXIT
· · · ·	OLO·IN
· · ·	DIANI LEG
· · ·	VLLIN·Cs

The first thing that struck me, in contemplating these disjointed fragments of a long inscription, was that the last line contained the names of the Consuls, (I should say that the final s, though on the stone, is exceedingly faint, and was not perceived for a considerable time), and finding the names of Anullinus and Fronto in Horsley, as Consuls in A.D. 199,

I concluded, too hastily, that it was probably in their year that the tablet was erected, or the object accomplished which it was raised to commemorate, and that it was Geta's name that had been erased. To Mr. Thompson Watkin, of Liverpool, however, I am indebted for a correction of this approximate, but erroneous, conclusion. Mr. Watkin pointed out to me that it could not be the consulship of Anullinus and Fronto in A.D. 199 that was signalled, but that it must be the consulship of Sabinus and Anullinus in A.D. 216, inasmuch as, in the former case, the name Anullinus would have come first, whereas in the latter case, it rightly comes last. He pointed out, too, that, in this case, it was, in all probability, "Antoniniana," or some similar word, that had been erased in the second line.

There can be no doubt that this interpretation is correct, and that the erection of the tablet, or the occurrence of the event it commemorates, must be referred to the consulship of Caius Attius Sabinus, 2, and Sextus Cornelius Anullinus, in the sixth year of the reign of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Bassianus, generally known as the Emperor Caracalla, and in the year of our Lord 216.

In this way the last line, though so imperfect, has been made to yield important information. Similarly the line preceding yields us matter of considerable interest. This line—the last but one—evidently ended with the name and title of the Legate, or Proprætor, the chief Governor of Britain: We have enough of his name left almost to reconstruct the whole. His name must have ended with the letters **DIANVS**, and I cannot help thinking that the whole was possibly **MARCVS ANTONIVS GORDIANVS**, and that the owner of the name may have been he, who was afterwards proclaimed Emperor by the soldiers in Africa, in revolt against the detested rule of the Emperor Caius Julius Verus Maximinus and his son. The details of the life of the Emperor Marcus Antonius Gordianus, before his elevation to the Imperial purple, are not given with much fulness by his biographer, Julius Capitolinus, and we are not told anything whatsoever of his employments between his first consulship, in A.D. 213, and his second in A.D. 229. Soon after the latter he was made Pro-consul of Africa. I cannot help thinking it possible that after the former, he was made Proprætor of Britain. The record of a "Sylva," which he gave to the people of Rome, and of which a painting long remained in his house at Rome, may be thought

in a measure to countenance this supposition, inasmuch as, among the wild animals it contained, we read that there were "three hundred stags with palmated antlers, intermingled with Britons."

As the name of the Legate is in the genitive case, it was, in all probability, preceded by the words "sub curâ," or "ex auctoritate," and the abbreviation LEG would be followed by AVG · PR · PR · in the following line. We thus get the whole of the last line, and nearly the whole of the last line but one, and are led to conclude that each line must have contained not far from thirty letters, more or less, and that the inscription must, therefore, have been, in its entirety, about five times as long as the portion that remains.

Ascending to the last line but two, we have, apparently, portions of the words "A solo instruxit." The only other feasible alternative is, I think, that OLO belonged to the name of the official who superintended the work commemorated, and that IN is the first syllable of the word INSTANTE or INSISTENTE. This is not impossible, and IOLVS, the name of the dedicator of an altar found near Kirby Thore, in Westmorland, occurs, to suggest to us how it might have been.

The line above this gives us a portion of the word "Induxit." I once thought the word might be "Conduxit;" but, if it were really "Conduxit," I think we should see a portion of the curve of the o. Taking it as "Induxit," it seems to suggest the bringing of water to the station by an aqueduct, a thought which occurred independently to myself, and to a friend, whose name, if I were at liberty to mention it, would add weight to the suggestion.

The same friend, also, threw out a hint for the solution of the puzzle of the line above, viz., ERRITQ. He suggested that the ERRIT was part of some word denoting the nationality of the erector of the tablet. Illiberritanus occurred to him as illustrative. I do not know whether Illiberritanus has actually occurred for a native, or a citizen of Illiberis in Gallia Narbonensis; the word used by Pliny is, I believe, Illiberinus. But I think it extremely likely that the explanation of ERRIT must be sought in this direction. Bigerritanus, *i.e.* a native of Bigerra, a city of Spain mentioned by Livy, occurs to me as possibly the true word. The Q would be the first letter of "Qui" or "Quod," the rest of which would be found in the next line.

If this conjecture respecting the character of these letters be well

founded, it follows, almost of necessity, that the rest of the third line contained the name of the erector of the tablet; and we must look in the first line, as, in any case, we should most naturally do, for the Emperor's name, or for the name of some deity or deities.

There does not seem room for the name and titles of an Emperor, and EQQ stands very awkwardly, for such a commencement, at the end of the line. These letters, EQQ, seem certainly to stand for "Equitum," not for "Equites," nominative, and yet the previous word can hardly have been "Præfectus," for the name of the erector of the tablet, as we have seen, comes probably in the third line. "Numeri Equitum" suggests itself as feasible, with "Genio" before it, and some such additional dedication as "Deæ Sanctæ Fortunæ" preceding that. The second line would then contain the name of the company of cavalry, "called," on account of their valour, or in compliment to the Emperor, "The Antoninian;" the third line would give the name of their commander, and his nationality too, and the fourth and fifth might run something like this:—"Qui aquam in stationem induxit, et balneum cum basilica a solo instruxit."

The utmost anyone can do is to give a *possible* restoration of the inscription. In any case it must be largely conjectural. At the same time the *character* of the inscription may be correctly divined. In the hope that some abler pens may come nearer the truth, I will put together the conclusions to which I have been led; and will exhibit the whole as I think it may have been when perfect, only premising that the names both of "goddess," "company," and "colonel," are, of course, purely conjectural, and are only inserted to enable the suggested restoration to be read without the discomfort embarrassing lacunæ cause.

RESTORATION.

21	( <i>D. S. Fortunæ et</i> ) Genio N. Eqq.	EQQ
28	( <i>Concordiensium</i> ) Antoninianorum	. . .
28	( <i>T. F. Narbo</i> ) Pr. Eqq. Natione Bigerrit Q	ERRITQ
25	ui aquam in stationem induxit	NDVXIT
27	et ( <i>balneum cum basilica</i> ) a solo in	OLO · IN
29	struxit sub cura ( <i>M. Ant. Gor</i> ) diani Leg	DIANI · LEG
25	Aug. Pr. Pr. Sabin. II. et Anullin. Cs.	VLLIN · CS

## EXPANSION.

(*Deæ Sanctæ Fortunæ et*) Genio Numeri Equitum  
 (*Concordiensium*) Antoninianorum.  
 (*T. F. Narbo*) Praefectus Equitum Natione Bigerritanus Q  
 ui aquam in stationem induxit  
 et (*balneum cum basilica*) a solo in  
 struxit sub cura (*M. Ant. Gor*) diani Legati  
 Augustalis Propraetoris, Sabino iterum et Anullino Consulibus.

## TRANSLATION.

(*To the Holy Goddess Fortune and*) to the Genius of the Company of (*Concordian*) Cavalry, called the Antoninian, (*T. F. Narbo*), Colonel of Horse, by nation a Bigerritan, who brought water to the Station and built from the ground (*a bath with a basilica*), under the administration of (*Marcus Antonius Gor*) dianus, Imperial Legate and Propraetor, and during the Consulship of Sabinus, for the second time, and Anullinus, erected this.

I have enclosed within brackets the names and specific objects that are simple guesses, and have placed on the left-hand side the number of letters in each line as restored, and on the right-hand side the fragments of the lines preserved on the stone.

When the thought occurred to me that the making of an aqueduct was probably the achievement, or one of the achievements, commemorated on the tablet, it also naturally occurred to me to enquire whether the circumstances of the station at Chester-le-Street were such as to render such an undertaking on the part of the Roman commanding officer likely. I was not able to go over again to Chester-le-Street to make enquiries on the spot; but I wrote to Colonel Johnson, of the Deanery, whose house stands within the ramparts,<sup>1</sup> and whose extensive grounds comprise a considerable portion of the ancient castrum. His reply was as follows:—

“There exist remains of a small tunnel arched with brick, three feet, or so, in height, in the Deanery field; and also in the adjoining field, to the south, and towards the site of the Roman baths, ascertained and explored several years ago. There is a fine spring of water here close to the north-east angle of the camp, but distant from and below the

<sup>1</sup> Or close outside the ramparts.

level of the brick tunnel. Probably the Romans procured their main supply from the springs to the west, and on the outside of the fortress, and where the ground rises to a considerable height."<sup>1</sup>

From this it appears that there is nothing to militate against the supposition that a portion of the water supply of the Roman garrison, at any rate, was brought from a distance.

A number of other interesting questions are opened up by the finding of this inscription, but upon them I will not now dilate; but, thanking you for the attention with which you have kindly listened to my account of the stone, and to my notions of what it may contain, I will leave the puzzle of its further elucidation in your friendly hands.

#### NOTE.

The following phrases and expressions occur in inscriptions found at the undermentioned places. They illustrate the conjectural restoration of the text above.

Deae Fortunae Sanctae—Binchester.

Deo Sancto Silvano—Birdoswald.

Et Genio alae—Benwell.

Et Genio cohortis—Lanchester.

Numeri Equitum Stratonicianorum—Brougham.

Numeri Exploratorum Divitiesium Antoninianorum—Recorded by Henzen, No. 6,730.

Antoniniana (erased)—High Rochester, and The Chesters.

Praefectus Equitum—Binchester, and many other places.

Natione Catuallauna—South Shields.

Civis Hispanus Cauriesis—Bath.

Publius Aelius Magnus domo Mursa ex Pannoniâ inferiore praefectus—Old Carlisle.

Aemilius Crispinus praefectus equitum natus in provincia Africa de Tusdro—Old Carlisle.

Balneum cum basilicâ a solo instruxit—Lanchester.

Sub cura Nonii Philippi Legati Augustalis propraetoris Attico et Praetextato Consulibus—Old Carlisle.

Apr. et Ruf. Cos—Near Birdoswald.

Gordiano II. et Pompeiano Cos—Papcastle.

<sup>1</sup>The tunnels, spoken of by Colonel Johnson, are not ancient; but when, or why, they were made, I have not been able to ascertain.