

ON A ROMAN MILESTONE FOUND AT RHIWIAU IN
NORTH WALES.

READ BY J. COLLINGWOOD BRUCE, LL.D., D.C.L., F.S.A., ON
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OF the many interesting monuments which are to be found in that city of ruins, Rome, one of the most suggestive is a white marble cylinder, which stands on the Piazza of the Capitoline Hill. It has on it the names of the Emperors Vespasian and Nerva and the numeral I. It of old informed the traveller on the Via Appia that he was one mile from the eternal city. Another milestone stands on this Piazza marked with the numeral VII.

The Romans knew that if they were to govern the world they must have the means of readily communicating with every part of it. So important was this matter considered that the formation of their roads was committed to some of their highest officers. So well were the roads constructed that portions of them over which the legions of the great Julius, Pompey, and Antony marched still exist in a good condition. In the provinces the same system was adopted as in the Italian peninsula. On looking at a map of Roman Britain we cannot but be struck at the complete net-work of roads which overspread the island, and doubtless many tracks existed of yore which have escaped the cognizance of modern observers. By way of showing how well ready access to the great centres of population in our own country was provided for, I may mention that seven roads are known to have branched off from LONDINIUM (London), though it was not then the capital of the island; URICONIUM (Wroxeter) was the centre of five lines of Roman road; and six roads started from MANCUNIUM (Manchester). And then, as it regards the region of the Wall in our neighbourhood, roads existed by which the legionary force in York might at once reach South Shields, Newcastle, Corbridge, Caerboron

or Carlisle in case the auxiliary troops which garrisoned the Great Barrier were exhibiting a mutinous disposition, or were likely to be overpowered by the enemy. The Celts, or other early occupants of Britain, would have track-ways which marked their passage from one place to another; but we have no reason to suppose that they were otherwise formed than by the traffic which passed over them.

The Roman roads were designed so as to give the best gradients and at the same time command the points from which an enemy could best be observed. They were besides carefully paved. Large kerbstones were placed at the edges, and the other materials were so arranged as to give the surface a curved form, thus at once bestowing upon the way the benefit of the principle of the arch, and providing for the speedy removal of the water which fell upon it. That the pavement of the Roman road was one of its chief characteristics is evident from the fact that in the times succeeding the Roman occupation these ways were usually denominated *streets*; thus we have Watling Street, Ermin Street, Ichnield Street, &c., the word street properly signifying a paved way. The same thing is shown by the name given to the Roman road leading in our neighbourhood from Cilurnum to Magna—the Stanegate. That the structure of the Roman roads was regarded as something extraordinary by the mediæval inhabitants of the country is further shown by the fact that they were supposed to be the work of magicians, such as the renowned Michael Scott; and one of them, that proceeding from the vicinity of Corbridge to Berwick, is without periphrasis called the Devil's Causeway. Resting places for travellers were placed upon the route of the roads at reasonable distances. At some of these camps travellers could obtain a change of horses; at others they were only expected to rest awhile.

The roads seem to have been provided with milestones to inform the traveller of his progress on his journey. In the vicinity of VINDOLANA, the modern Chesterholm, there were standing three successive milestones in Horsley's day; only one stands now, but another, a mile to the west of it, lies prostrate and broken. A Roman milestone is usually of a cylindrical form, standing above the ground six or seven feet, and having a diameter of nearly two feet. They are usually inscribed with the name of the Emperor in whose reign they were erected, and the number of miles (thousand paces) that the spot is

from the next station. The Emperor was Lord of the Road, and any offence committed on it was an offence against majesty. The same idea has descended to modern times, for we commonly talk of the King's or Queen's highway, and a highway-robbery is even now an aggravated offence.

There is a little uncertainty about the length of the Roman mile. In Dr. Smith's "Dictionary of Antiquities," it is stated to have been 1,618 English yards in length, or 142 yards less than the English statute mile. Mr. MacLauchlan, who surveyed the Roman Wall for the Duke of Northumberland, came to a similar conclusion in this way: he found that the usual distance between the mile-castles on the Roman Wall was $73\frac{1}{2}$ chains, or 1,618 yards, and he hence concluded that this was the length of a Roman mile. By another calculation the Roman mile is made to be little more than 1,614 yards. The late Mr. Thomas Sopwith found that the distance between the milestone at Chesterholm and the site of the one to the west of it was 1,698 yards, which is more than the greatest length already mentioned; but when he made the measurement, the westerly stone was not standing, and he may have been misinformed as to its original position.

The milestones on the Roman roads in Britain must have been very numerous; but very few have come down to our day. This is not to be wondered at. Until the days of Macadam, the roads in England were kept in a most disorderly state. To fill up some chasm in the way, a mass of stone, such as a Roman milliary consisted of, would prove most valuable, and hence it would often be broken up to mend the road. It is only therefore in remote districts that any could be expected to survive the lapse of fourteen centuries.

It is interesting in foreign books of travel to observe notices of these milestones. Thus, Dr. Robinson, in his *Biblical Researches*, Vol. iii., p. 415, states that he passed two Roman milestones between Tyre and Sidon, and observed traces of a Roman road between Sidon and Beyrout. The Romans left the same traces of their handiwork everywhere. In a paper upon the Roman milliaries found in Britain, by the Rev. Prebendary Scarth, published in the *Journal of the Royal Archæological Institute*, it is stated that up to that date (1877) fifty-six had been discovered in Britain, but that two of these were doubtful. Of these the earliest belong to the reign of Hadrian, of which there were then two.

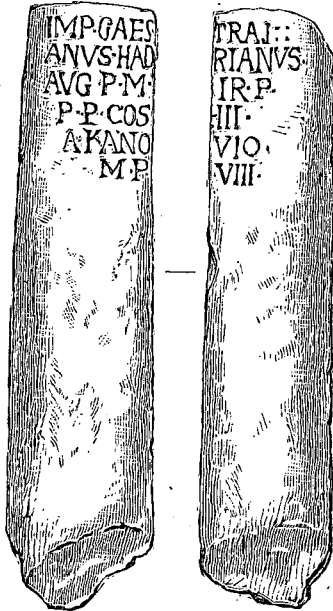
At our last meeting our senior Vice-President, Mr. Clayton, described to us the discovery, near Cawfield's Crag on the Roman Wall, of two other milliaries, one of them of the time of Hadrian, the other of Severus Alexander. I have now to call your attention to the discovery of another milestone in the vicinity of Aber in North Wales; the inscription on it is perfect, and it also belongs to the time of Hadrian. A brief notice of the discovery appeared in the "Academy" of the date of March 3rd, from the pen of Mr. W. Thompson Watkin, but my attention has since been called to the stone by the Rev. E. W. Evans, senior curate of St. Nicholas', of this place, and my information respecting it has since been greatly increased by communications derived from the father of that gentleman, the Archdeacon of Merioneth, and Mr. Beedham of Ashfield House, Kimbolton.

The stone was found near Aber, which is not far from Bangor, in North Wales. The name of the parish in which it was found is Llanfairfechan, that of the farm Rhiwiau-uchaf, and the name of the field out of which it was dug is Caegwâg, which in English means "empty field." The inscribed or upper part of it was lying about four feet beneath the surface of the ground, while only a small portion of its lower end, rough and unhewn, was exposed. It was brought to light in consequence of a search for stone being made wherewith to build a new field-wall in the vicinity. The earth being removed, its artificial form was observed. The parish clerk of Aber got to hear of this "roller," and Major Platt, who is the owner of the farm, and resides close by at Gorddinog, sent his team and secured it from base uses. All honour to the parish clerk, and thanks to the Esquire of the district, for making sure of the treasure. The milliary, which is represented in the wood-cut shown on opposite page, is six feet seven inches high, and about nineteen inches in diameter. The inscription on it is as follows:—

IMP · CAES · TRAI
ANVS · HADRIANVS
AVG · P · M · TR · P · V
P · P · COS · III ·
A KANOVIO
M · P · VIII ·

which may be thus expanded:—"Imperator Cæsar Trajanus Hadrianus Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, Tribunitia potestate quintum, Pater

patriæ, Consul tertium. A Kanovio millia passuum octo ;” and rendered into English thus :—“The Emperor Cæsar Trajanus Hadrianus Augustus, high priest, possessed of the tribunitian power, the father of his country, consul for the third time. From Kanovium eight thousand paces.” The stone belongs to A.D. 121.



Before going further it may be well to notice that two other mile-stones have been found in this district. The first is stated in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Part II. of Vol. 65 (year 1795), page 559, to have been lately found in the parish of Llanddeiniolen, about a quarter of a mile to the north-east of an old building called Llys, at the distance of about six English miles from SEGONTIUM. The inscription being rude and much defaced has been variously read. The following versions of the reading have been given:—

HL	...
IMP	IMP
Q · TRO	Q TRO
CIECIO	CECIO
ISA S	ISAC
ER	IEF

Professor Hübner ("Corpus Insc. Lat.," VII., page 210) gives the following probable expansion of it thus:—"Domino nostro (?) imperatore Quinto Trojano Decio pio felice Augusto" Trojanus he considers to be a barbarous spelling of Trajanus.

The second was discovered at Tycoch, some two miles from Bangor, and nine Roman miles from SEGONTIUM, old Carnarvon, about the year 1806. The inscription is given as follows:—

N · VM · NC ·
 IMP · CAESAR · M
 AVREL · ANTONINVS
 PIVS TI IX · AVG · ARAB ·
 · IX

This reading seems to be slightly incorrect. Professor Hübner gives up the first line altogether, remarking, however, that it may be the remains of a former inscription. The rest of it may be read in English:—"The Emperor Cæsar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, pious, happy, Augustus, (surnamed) Arabicus, Adiabenicus, the high priest,"

The Eleventh Itinerary of Antonine describes a road from SEGONTIUM, Carnarvon, to DEVA, Chester. No doubt all three milestones have stood upon this road. DEVA was the garrison town that was occupied for centuries by the Twentieth Legion, styled the Valerian and Victorious. Chester is a Roman city yet. Its streets are in conformity with the arrangements of a Roman stationary camp. If the troops of the second or third century were suddenly coming to life, they might at once resort to their own proper quarters—perhaps to the annoyance of the present inhabitants. So important a station as DEVA necessarily had roads leading directly to the north, the south, and east of the island. And further, it really was the station which travellers would make their last resting place before proceeding to Anglesey and Ireland. Passing along the *iter*, westward, we come to CONOVIUM, or as it is on the milestone KANOVIUM, the modern Caerhun. CONOVIUM has no doubt derived its name from the river near which it stands, and which is called by the Welsh the Conwy. Rhûn, king of North Wales, occupied the Roman CONOVIUM, A.D. 560, and hence its present name Caerhun, which means the fortress or castle of Rhun. CONOVIUM

is distant about five miles from the modern town of Conway, and lies on the west side of the river Conway. The parish church stands within it, and is probably built of stones taken from the Roman buildings. Camden tells us that from the spoils of Caerhun Edward I. built the new town at the mouth of the river called thence Aber-Conway (the mouth of the Conway). Numerous Roman relics have been found at Caerhun, amongst them a villa consisting of five apartments provided with hypocausts. Pottery of all kinds have been dug up, and an amulet of curious workmanship adorned with figures in blue enamel. In Gibson's Camden (ed. 1695) it is stated that several tiles inscribed with the letters LEG. X. have been found. The Twentieth Legion was for centuries located at Chester, hence Horsley thinks that these tiles have been mis-read for LEG. XX. Dr. Hübner thinks that the proper reading must have been LEG. II. The second legion was located at Carleon, in South Wales. The only inscription in Britain mentioning the LEGIO X. FRETENSIS is one found at Maryport, in Cumberland. The subject seems to want further investigation. One of the most curious objects discovered here has been a brazen shield of a circular form, having on its face concentric rings, and in the centre an elevated boss terminating in a sharp point. The only metal used in its construction is iron. Through the kindness of the Venerable Archdeacon Evans I have been supplied with a careful drawing of it, by Mr. Barber, of Bangor, which I now produce. The shield is about a foot in diameter. It was stuffed in the inside with hair, covered with leather. It resembles one found on the field of Shrewsbury, where Hotspur fell, and which is now in the Museum of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle. Whether it be of Roman or Mediæval origin may fairly be considered an open question. The Roman road leading from CONOVIVM to the coast is one of great interest. Mr. Beedham has kindly furnished me with the following description of its course towards Aber, he having repeatedly traversed it:—"Leaving the station of CONOVIVM we come into the road from Conway to Llanrwst, and take the lane immediately opposite to us, this lane being in fact the Roman road. In about three-quarters of a mile we have upon our left the streamlet called Afon Ro, which finds its way into the Conway a little to the south of the Roman station. We then cross Afon Ro and have it on our right for

a short distance; we cross it again and have it on our left, our direction now being somewhat north-east until we come to the cross roads. There can be no doubt that in the time of the Romans the Conway was crossed, in whatever way, at the same spot as at present, namely, at Talycafn, where the ferry now is. The river and the road were alike protected on the Carnarvonshire side by an outwork, marked Castell upon the Ordnance Map, and this name may be regarded as evidence of its Roman origin. The mound yet remains. From this point the station of CONOVIUM is distant about a mile to the south in a direct line, and it was probably reached by a road whose course may be fairly indicated by the present footpath. The road from Talycafn and the road from CONOVIUM unite at the spot at which we had arrived when this digression began, and which is about two miles from each of those places. From the point of junction we bear westward through the hamlet of Ro, which is at the foot of the mountain range, and from which there is what may be called a steep ascent to Bwlchyddeufaen. About a mile from the cross roads is a farm-house called Buarth, not far from which is a very fine cromlech, which is or was used as a place of shelter for sheep. Some distance beyond Buarth the road skirts Talycafn, a mountain which reaches a height of 2,000 feet above the level of the sea. We then come to the narrow pass of the Two Stones, or, as it is called in Welsh, Bwlchyddeufaen. Of the two stones, one is still standing, and the other, though thrown down, remains upon the spot where it used to stand. The two stones are on the highest ground, and at a short distance beyond them the road is very well defined; indeed, although we are now in the open mountains, no difficulty can arise in tracing its course. Here and there the pedestrian will stay to examine its construction, where it consists of an embankment formed of stones now grown over with grass. In parts it is sunk below the surface, giving the idea that in this case, as in many others, the Romans adopted the course of a British track. The pass pointed out the natural entrance into the mountains, and the most suitable course westward is apparent at a glance. After crossing the streamlet marked Glas-y-Sais upon the Ordnance Map, the road skirts Foel ganol, and is very well marked out and formed, and so it reaches the brow of Foel dduarth. Here are many very interesting remains belonging to the pre-Roman period, and several of those sunken roads

which I am unwilling to describe as ditches. We then leave the open unenclosed mountains and pass through an iron gate, after which the road is walled on each side for some distance. Shortly after passing through the gate, the stone paving of the road remains, and is plainly visible for a short distance. So the road continues over Pont Newydd, the river which rises in Lake Anafon by its side for a time, through the little village of Aber, past the church, and across the great Holyhead road to what is now the beach. I use this expression because there can be little doubt, if indeed there be any, that in the time of the Romans the Lavan Sands, as they now are, were dry land. Close by the side of the river, in the village of Aber, is a mount which is marked upon the Ordnance Map as a tumulus, but which is very similar to the Castell at Talycafn, and may not improbably have been a corresponding defensive work. From the end of the road to Gallows Point, Beaumaris, the distance is under four miles, with the advantage of crossing the Straits of Menai in their narrowest part. A Roman road is said to run from Beaumaris to Holyhead, and it would be difficult to suppose that the Romans did not find their way from Aber into Anglesey. The irruption of the sea did not take place until A.D. 560, or for upwards of a century after the departure of the Romans."

From Aber access was easily obtained to the island of Anglesey. Archdeacon Evans informs me that he remembers in his youth seeing boats on fair and market days crossing the ferry anciently known as Porthywygyr at ebb tide with men and cattle from Aber to Beaumaris, over the Lavan Sands. In foggy weather the bell of Aber church was rung to guide travellers. The Romans, no doubt, wrought the minerals in the Isle of Anglesey. Quite a goodly number of copper cakes of Roman manufacture have been found in the island, and at Holyhead is a considerable Roman work called *Caer Gybi*. From this place the passage to Ireland is easy; and though the Romans had no settlement in Ireland, Tacitus tells us that in his day merchants traded with it. He says, "Ireland is less than Britain, but exceeds in magnitude all the islands of the Mediterranean. The soil, the climate, the manners and genius of the inhabitants differ little from those of Britain. By the means of merchants resorting thither for the sake of commerce, the harbour and approaches to the coast are well known." (*Agricola XXIV.*)

The iter of Antoninus to which we have referred is continued from Aber to Carnarvon, the SEGONTIUM of the Romans. The site of this ancient city is about a mile from the present town. It exhibits vestiges of Roman masonry. Fragments of Roman inscriptions, together with numerous coins, Samian ware, and other Roman remains have also been found in it.

In concluding my brief paper I must remark that in writing it I have laboured under the disadvantage of not personally knowing the district, but as will be observed I have been greatly aided by those who know it thoroughly and who take a lively interest in the subject.