



ROMAN ALTARS RECENTLY DISCOVERED AT CHESTERHOLM.

IV.—NEWLY DISCOVERED ROMAN ALTARS.

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1.—FROM CHESTERHOLM (VINDOLANA).

Two Roman altars were found in the latter part of last year at Chesterholm, in a grass field about 120 yards west of the west wall of the fort. I have not seen them myself, but by the kindness of Mrs. Clayton I have had squeezes and photographs taken by Mr. Hepple, which fully suffice for my purpose. Mrs. Clayton has sent photographs to the Society.

1. The more important of the altars is 34 ins. high and 22 ins. wide, and is inscribed with eight lines of somewhat uneven and irregular lettering, as follows:—

PRO · DOM/	<i>Pro domu</i>
DIVINA · ET · NV	<i>divina et nu-</i>
MINIBVS · AVG	<i>minibus Aug-</i>
VSTORVM · VOL	<i>ustorum, Volc-</i>
ANO SACRVM	<i>ano sacrum</i>
VICANI VINDOL	<i>vicani Vindol-</i>
ANDESSES · CV	<i>andesses, cuſram</i>
AGENTE · · OI · · ·	<i>agente</i>
V S L M	<i>V(otum) S(olvit) L(ibens) M(erito)</i>

That is, translated, 'For the safety of the Imperial House and the Divinity of the Emperors, dedicated to Vulcan by the men of the vicus of Vindolanda, under the supervision of (name illegible).' Vindolanda is obviously the place usually called Vindolana, *i.e.* Chesterholm. You will not need to be told that this name is spelt Vindolana in the Notitia (*Occ.* xl. 41) and Vindolande in the lists of the Ravenna Geographer. As a rule, the former is the more accurate authority; here Ravennas wins. The occurrence of the name is interesting, not only as correcting the spelling, but also because it is the first occurrence of the name on an inscription. It is also, with the exception of the mention

of Amboglanna (Birdoswald) on the Rudge Cup, now at Alnwick, the first epigraphic mention of any name of any fort on the Wall of Hadrian. The altar is further noteworthy since it tells us something of the civilian life which existed just outside each of these forts. The *vicani Vindolandenses* (phonetically varied into *-desses*) must have been the folk of the *vicus*—parish, we might call it—of Romano-British Chesterholm. They plainly had some sort of local unity; as they put up an altar collectively, they must have had some parish council or parish meeting, possibly with the power of levying rates to pay for their joint action. *Vicus* itself is a word with several senses, but it often and properly denotes a village in the country, which has its own *magistri* and assembly and communal property and communal shrines and so forth. We need not suppose that the *vicus* of the Vindolandensians was as accurately organized as a *vicus* in Italy or in any well civilized region of the Roman Empire. But it was much the same sort of thing, if on a smaller scale. We meet the term *vicus* elsewhere used to describe the little settlements which gathered outside the forts. For example, outside the large legionary fortress of Moguntiacum (now Mainz) on the Rhine, there seem to have been several *vici* which gradually coalesced into a definite town, and at the forts of Benningen and Oehringen, on the frontier defences of Germania Superior, the accompanying villages of civilians were styled 'vicus Murrensium' and 'vicus Aurelius or Aurelianensis' respectively. Very likely many of these civil settlements adjoining to forts were *vici*, some perhaps in the full sense of the term, some as mere villages. In either case, their inhabitants would be the women and children of the garrison, the traders and old soldiers who collected round it, and a few stray natives.

The date of the altar is not easy to fix; here the lettering gives no sure clue. But the phrases *domus divina* and *numina Augustorum*, though they occur at all sorts of times, fit best with the end of the second or the beginning of the third century.

A word may be added as to the etymology of the name Vindolanda. The first half is familiar as the first half of the names Vindobala and Vindomora in the Mural region, and of Vindomis, Vindogara, Vindogladia in other parts of Britain, as well as of Vindobona (now Vienna on the Danube), Vindonissa and other places on the European continent. It is connected with a Celtic stem *vindo-*, which is said to mean 'white' or metaphorically 'good,' and which also forms a proper name, Vindos—like White and Good in English. There are accordingly two alternative senses which might be attached to place-names beginning with Vindo-. Vindobona, for instance, might mean either 'the white city' or 'the city called after Vindos'; as there is nothing particularly white near Vienna, the second sense is usually assumed for it. Vindogladia, on the other hand, is on the chalk hills of Dorset and is reasonably explained as 'white trenches' or the like. I have never noticed any very white features in the scenery of Chesterholm, and should here accept the proper name Vindos as forming its first half. But plainly it is not a case for dogmatizing.

The second half represents a Celtic word *landa*, which denotes a small enclosed (or defined) plot of ground, and is the same as the Welsh 'llan' and apparently as the English 'land.' It does not occur again in composition in any other Romano-British place-name, nor do I think that it is so used in any Roman place-name on the continent. In Welsh, of course, 'llan' is a common compound, but it is always prefixed.

Vindolana, the spelling which has hitherto been familiar to English archaeologists, appears to mean much the same as Vindolanda. But its second part is etymologically puzzling; it may be the second part of the name Mediolanum, and be connected with words like the latin *planus*, 'flat.' Chesterholm is hardly well described as flat.

2. The other altar, somewhat smaller in size, has not yet been deciphered; its first line seems to have been I O M —'to Iuppiter best and greatest,' but nothing else is clear.