

VI.—A ROMAN ALTAR FROM STAWARD PELE, AND ROMAN REMAINS IN ALLENDALE

BY ERIC BIRLEY.

(Read on 26 April, 1950.)

§1. *Introduction.*¹

It is now nearly sixty-five years since C. C. Hodges brought to the notice of this society that there was a Roman altar built into the fabric of the ruined pele-tower at Staward. At the meeting of 30 September, 1885, he exhibited the sketch here reproduced as fig 1, and his accompanying paper was summarized in our *Proceedings* as follows:²

"... he had long been aware of the presence of a large number of stones of Roman workmanship in the remains of the gateway to the Pele, but it was only on the 29th of August last that he observed a Roman altar in the upper portion of this ruin. It was used as a quoin stone and was in a fair state of preservation, one side only was visible and this was ornamented with a carving of a bull's head in relief, the mouldings were bold and of refined character; the focus was not visible in the present position of the altar. Other Roman stones in the same building show sunk panels, smoothly-dressed surfaces, cramp holes, and excellent specimens of broached tooling."

Eleven years later the society visited the site and inspected the remains then to be seen there,³ but otherwise the dis-

¹ The following abbreviations are employed: AA², ⁴=*Archæologia Aeliana*, second, fourth series; PSAN²=this society's *Proceedings*, second series; CW²=*Cumberland and Westmorland Transactions*, new series; CIL=*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*; C=CIL vii; HN=Hodgson, *History of Northumberland*, part II, vol. iii (1840); JRS=*Journal of Roman Studies*; RW^{1,2}=Bruce, *The Roman Wall*, 1st ed. (1851), 2nd ed. (1853).

² PSAN² ii, 94.

³ PSAN² vii, 269 (excursion of 21 September, 1896).

covery was allowed to remain unexploited, and in particular no attempt was made to arrange for the extraction of the altar from its lofty resting-place.

On my last visit to Staward before the war, in 1937, I noted that there were still three quoin-stones in position above the altar, as had been the case in 1885; but on my first post-war visit, in July 1947, I found that the upper two stones had fallen, and the third was perched precariously and likely to fall before long. On 9 July, 1948, Mr. Michael de Lisle, then an undergraduate of Trinity College, Oxford, was stopping with me at Chesterholm, and proposed to spend the day exploring Allendale; I therefore suggested to him that he should visit Staward, and see whether there had been any further falls of masonry. His report was a startling one: the altar itself had fallen from the tower, and was now lying at the bottom of the deep cleugh on the north side of the plateau on which the tower itself stands (fig. 2); its fall had been broken by the trees which grow sparsely on the steep hillside, and it had taken no hurt from it, while it had by good fortune landed face upwards on a small patch of level ground by the side of the Harsondale burn. The face was inscribed, and Mr. de Lisle had been able to clean its surface with water from the burn and to secure a tolerably complete reading of the inscription. I myself went to look at the altar the next day, and a few days later I paid another visit, this time accompanied by my friend professor R. Laur-Belart, of Basel, who succeeded (in spite of difficult lighting conditions) in taking the photograph of the side of the altar, with

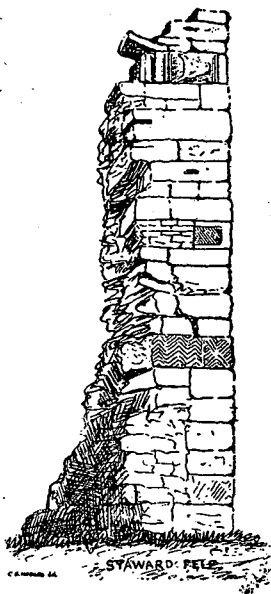


FIG. 1.

its *bucranium* in high relief, here reproduced as plate x, and on that occasion we were able to agree on a provisional reading of the text. But in some places it was hard to decipher, and it has seemed best to put off reporting the discovery to this society until now, so as to take into account Mr. R. P. Wright's examination of the stone, deferred until a few weeks ago because of the long illness from which we all rejoice that he has made so excellent a recovery; meanwhile, the provisional reading of the text has been printed in the *Journal of Roman Studies*,⁴ but the present paper offers the first detailed study and an improved reading of it.

It must be added that the altar still remains where it fell, and there seems little likelihood of it ever being removed—for it would require a greater labour force and more machinery than is ever likely to be available, to hoist it back to the summit of the plateau; it would be out of the question to try to move it upstream or down along the bed of the cleugh, or up the still more tangled opposite slope.

§2. *The altar and its inscription.*

The altar is $37\frac{1}{2}$ in. high; its left side has been trimmed away, but its original width can be calculated as 18 in. at the top, where the centre of its capital is marked by a circular disc in relief, with a central depression; at its base it must have been about 22 in. wide. In its mutilated state it is now $13\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide at the top and 16 in. at base. There is no *focus*, but there is a well-moulded conventional faggot on the right side of the capital, as well as the central disc already referred to; immediately below comes a band, $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. high, with firmly cross-hatched surface, and below that there are two neat mouldings. Below them comes the inscribed panel, with an unusual feature in the form of small recesses at its top and bottom corners, producing an ansate effect; the panel is 19 in. high, and carries seven lines of lettering, and below it there is a more roughly moulded base, 9 in. high.

The lettering of the inscription has not been badly drawn,

⁴ JRS xxxix, 112f.

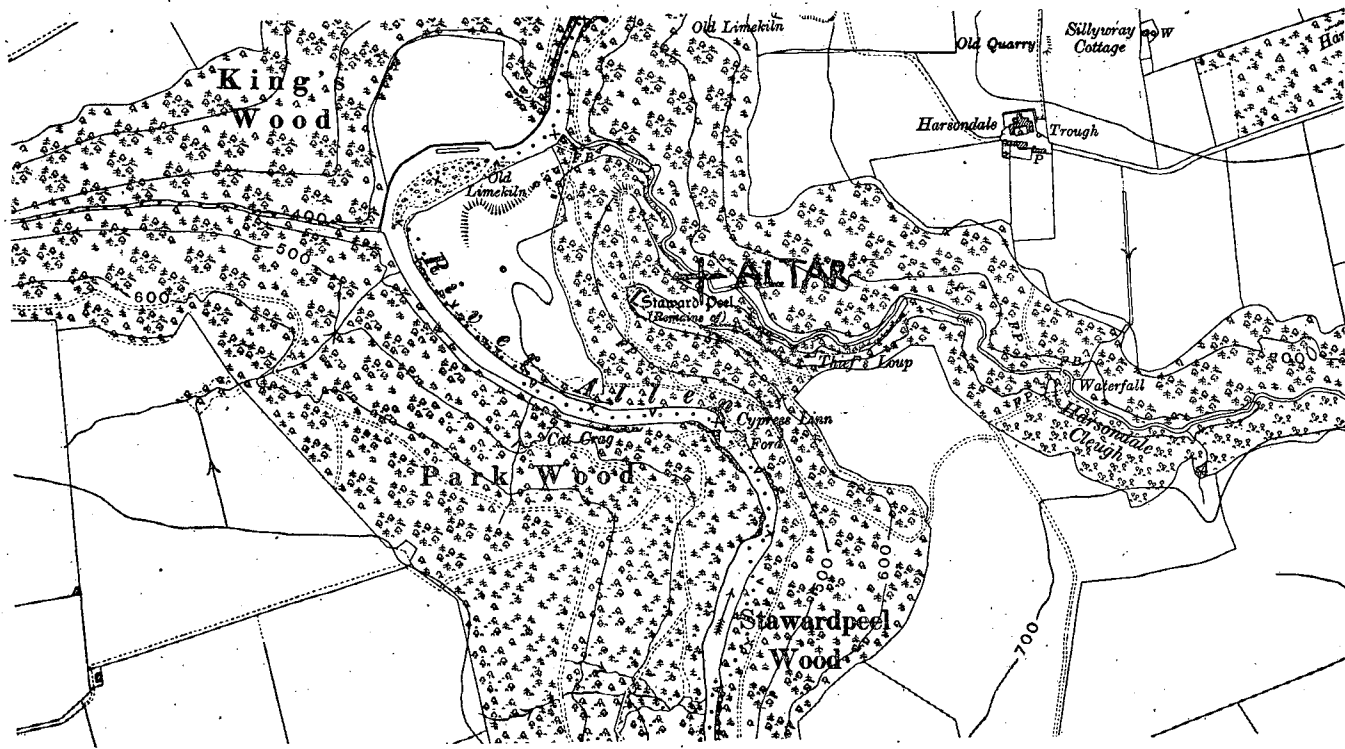


FIG. 2.

(Reproduced by permission from the 6-inch Ordnance Survey Map.)

but it has not been very deeply cut, and in parts it is now much weathered and difficult to decipher, particularly where the surface has begun to flake away. The letters in every line but the last are 2 in. high or a fraction more, but in the last line the first three letters are $2\frac{1}{4}$ in. high and the last one is barely 1 in. The lettering does not show any closely datable characteristics, but is best compatible with a date in the first half of the third century; in this view I have Mr. R. P. Wright's support. The spacing of the text has not been arranged with uniform success: witness the awkward division of the prefect's names; and there must have been a fairly wide margin at the beginning of each line, for only two letters have been lost from the beginning of line 3, and one each from lines 2 and 4-6, but there is little or no free space at the ends of the lines. The reading of the text, in the study of which I have had the advantage of Mr. Wright's autopsy and squeeze, as well as my own study under varying conditions of light and humidity, is as follows (letters of which portions only survive are indicated in *italic*, letters wholly restored being given in lower case):

1		I O M
2	c	OH IIII GALL
3	cu	I·PraEST·L·II
4	.	GIVS PVDEN
5	s	·PRaEFFECT
6	a	RAM pOSVIT
7		V V S ^L

Restored and expanded, that gives: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) | [c]oh(ors) IIII Gall(orum), | [cu]i p[ra]est L(ucius)[· · | ·]gius Pudēn | [s] pr[a]efect(us), [a]ram [p]osuit, | u(t) v(overat) s(olvens) l(ibenter)*—"To Juppiter Best and Greatest, the fourth cohort of Gauls, in command of which is Lucius—gius Pudens, prefect, has set up this altar, as it had vowed to do, willingly fulfilling (its vow)." For the precise form of the prefect's names, and for the unit which he commanded, reference may be made to the next two sections



THE ALTAR FROM STAWARD PELE.

of this paper; meanwhile it may be noted that the concluding formula, in line 7, is an exceptionally rare one, but Dessau gives another instance of it (*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, 3210) and suggests the above expansion of the abbreviations. It must be added that it is relatively uncommon to find a military unit placing any such formula at the close of a dedication to *Juppiter Optimus Maximus*. Several letters of the inscription, it will be seen, are incompletely preserved and ten have gone entirely, but there is no doubt as to the reading of it, except in the case of the prefect's *nomen*, which is considered in the next section.

§3. *The prefect.*

The mutilation of the inscribed face leaves the precise names of the prefect in doubt, as we have seen. Our provisional reading in 1948 gave *L. Li* at the end of line 3 and *]ius* at the beginning of the following line; and since *Licinius* is by far the commonest *nomen* beginning in *Li-*, it seemed best to assume that the missing letters were *cin*, and the original reading *L. Licinius Pudens*—the more so as *L. Licinius Pudens* was one of the witnesses to the military diploma of 5 April, 71 (CIL xvi, 16), and *Sex. Licinius Pudens*, centurion in *legio xxii (Deiotariana)*, is attested by an inscription of A.D. 84 from Egypt (CIL iii, 36): it might have been thought possible that the dedicator of the Staward altar was a descendant of one or other of these first-century worthies. But on careful measurement it became clear that the space lost at the beginning of line 4 was insufficient to take three letters, and the next reading to suggest itself was *L. Li* | [*v*]*ius Pudens*; for *Livius* is the next in frequency among *nomina* in *Li-*. But on my last visit to the altar, a fortnight ago, a sudden shower both washed the surface of it and picked out its lettering exceptionally clearly, revealing the unmistakable ends of a G at the surviving beginning of line 4, while I was unable to satisfy myself of more than the two upright strokes of the last two letters of line 3. The *praenomen* *L.*, though incomplete, remained tolerably cer-

tain, it was probable that one letter had been lost at the beginning of line 4, and the problem then became to discover a *nomen* ending in *-gius*, beginning with one or two upright strokes and with a maximum of six letters. A search through Schulze's *Lateinische Eigennamen* and the indices of Dessau and CIL produced only four possible candidates, namely *Iegius* (several instances in CIL ix), *Magius* (fairly widespread, and an inscription from Trier, CIL xiii, 3731, in fact mentions one L. Magius Pudens), *Mogius* (three examples in CIL iii) and *Tigius* (CIL ix, 1989). *Magius* and *Mogius*, however, could only be accepted if the two uprights at the end of line 3 could be interpreted as the remains of an M, giving the reading *L. M* | [.] *gius*; and Mr. Wright's squeeze and contact-drawing put such a reading out of the question, for the form of M used in lines 1 and 6 has the uprights at a marked angle from the perpendicular. *Iegius* and *Tigius* are only possible if there has been no letter lost at the beginning of line 4, which in that case will have had a wider margin than the remaining lines; and it seems on balance best to suppose that the prefect's *nomen* was an unrecorded one: he will have to be indexed under his certain *cognomen*, Pudens.

§4. *The cohort.*

The fourth cohort of Gauls has long been familiar to us as the third-century garrison of Vindolanda, the modern Chesterholm; before settling down there, it had been at Templebrough in the south of Yorkshire in the first century, at Risingham, north of the Wall, in the time of Antoninus Pius,⁵ and, at other times, no doubt in the second century, at Castlesteads in Cumberland and at Castlehill on the Antonine Wall.⁶ Now Hodges pointed out, in his communication to the society,⁷ that the nearest known Roman stations to

⁵ C 1001 must surely be assigned to the governorship of Lollius Urbicus, in view of the style of its decorative frame; see *Northumberland County History* xv (1939), 134f. and plate facing 80.

⁶ Castlesteads: C 877 with JRS xvi, 240, 878. Castlehill: C 1129. For fuller references cf. AA⁴ viii, 191f.

⁷ PSAN² ii, 94.

Staward are Chesterholm, Housesteads and Whitley Castle, respectively four, five and ten miles away; and now that we know that the unit concerned with the erection of the altar was the cohort which in the third century was stationed at Chesterholm, the nearest of those three forts, it might seem logical to infer (as has been done in the *Journal of Roman Studies*⁸) that the altar itself was brought thence, in medieval times, for re-use in the building of the tower. But when we consider the terrain, such an origin seems hardly possible. Chesterholm is only four miles away as the crow flies; but to bring the altar thence to Staward, by any route practicable for wagons, would have involved a long detour and a series of very steep gradients, and I find it impossible to believe that the medieval builders would have been prepared to go so far and to so much trouble to collect dressed stones for their structure. The antiquaries of the nineteenth century would no doubt have suggested that there was an "outpost fort" somewhere in the vicinity, for which the cohort was responsible while Chesterholm remained its headquarters (this was how the discovery of altars of the Wallsend *coh. IIII Lingonum* at Tynemouth was explained); but if, as seems reasonable, we do assign the altar to the cohort's Chesterholm period, it will be preferable to suppose that it was set up in an isolated shrine, which need not be at all close to the fort in which it was stationed: and, if we are to look for such a shrine, there can be no likelier place for it than the little plateau on which the pele-tower itself was in due course built.

§5. *The site of the pele-tower* (fig. 2).

When one has studied the terrain, and appreciated the difficulty involved in leading dressed stone in wagons from Chesterholm or from any other known Roman site to the promontory on which Staward Pele stands, it must seem by far the simplest to suppose that the medieval builders were making use of stones which were already on the spot. The

⁸ JRS xxxix, 114.

ruined tower stands at the south-east end of a lozenge-shaped plateau (the long axis of which runs from south-east to north-west), as if to bar access by the only route practicable for wheeled traffic, along a long and narrow neck of land, barely wide enough for a cart-track, with an almost sheer fall on either side of it. The plateau itself is just above the 600-foot contour, and from it the ground slopes steeply to the south and west, where the Allen runs some 200 feet below, and northward into the bed of the Harsondale cleugh, a fall of 100 feet; at the north-western extremity the descent, though still steep, is not so precipitous, and a winding path now leads down to the Allen and thence along the river side northwards to Plankey mill. Across the neck of land, a good hundred yards short of the tower, a ditch seems to have been dug, into which the modern track dips; it is not clear whether ditch and tower form part of the same defensive scheme or whether, for example, the ditch is the sole remaining feature, at that end of the site, of a little promontory-fort, within which the tower was inserted in medieval times. There is another and more prominent ditch defending the north-western approach to the plateau. It may be noted that Mawer quotes a document of A.D. 1271, in which the place-name is written "Staworthe", which he interprets as "stone-enclosure";⁹ that might well indicate that there were ruins of a stone building of some kind to be seen there when the English first gave the place a name; and it may be suggested that the building was a Roman temple or shrine, occupying what must be regarded as an ideal position, high up above the gorge of the Allen.

The altar itself, and the other undoubted Roman stones in the ruins of the tower,¹⁰ look to be of the same freestone as has been quarried at some indeterminate time from the

⁹ *Place-Names of Northumberland and Durham* (1920) 188.

¹⁰ Three or four of them look as if they, too, might be altars or parts of altars, of about the same height as that under reference, and the "sunk panels" which Hodges reported could well be square *foci*; but in their present positions it is impossible to decide the matter.

west side of the promontory, so that there need have been no problem of logistics facing the Romans when they built their shrine, any more than that facing the medieval and later builders when they put up the pele-tower and its successor—the fine large ashlar of which may still be seen and admired at the north-western end of the plateau, though its plan remains to be studied and its significance interpreted by a competent specialist. Indeed, it would be well worth while to arrange for a combined assault on the problems of the site, where there seems a possibility, unmatched in our district, of finding pre-Roman, Roman and medieval structures superimposed, in an area small enough and clearly enough defined to make complete excavation a relatively simple matter—if once the difficulties of accommodating and maintaining the excavators can be solved.

If there was in fact a Roman shrine here (and that seems to me by far the likeliest explanation), the most remarkable thing about it will have been that it contained this altar dedicated to *Juppiter Optimus Maximus*, the chief guardian of the Roman army, who was normally honoured by altars set up on the parade-grounds of forts;¹¹ whereas an isolated shrine, far from any fort, might be thought more likely to have been dedicated to some local deity (like Vinotonus, whose shrines, high on the moor above Bowes in the North Riding of Yorkshire, were recently excavated by Mr. Wright and Dr. Richmond¹²), if not to the hunters' god Silvanus (to whom two altars were set up at remote places in Weardale¹³). But some people may prefer to think that the dedication of this altar should mean that it has in fact been brought to the Staward promontory from some Roman fort; and in that case one thinks at once of the old tradition of a Roman site at Old Town, little more than two miles away to the south, from which it would have been easy for wagons to bring whatever stone was needed for the construction of the medieval pele-tower.

¹¹ Cf. L. P. Wenham's discussion in CW² xxxix, 19f.

¹² Cf. *Yorks. Arch. Journ.* xxxvi, 383f. and xxxvii 107f.

¹³ C 450, 451.

§6. *The Old Town site* (fig. 3).

Few sites in our area have given rise to so much controversy as that at Old Town, and none, I think, remain so little known; it will be worth while to examine the evidence, even though we may not be able to arrive at a very firm conclusion—that cannot be reached without further field-work, but field-work will be easier if the history and scope of the problem can be defined.

Camden was the first writer to mention the site, in the 1600 edition of his *Britannia*;¹⁴ he had passed through our district on his northern tour in the previous year, and it seems that he only heard of the place on that occasion, though it had been marked on Christopher Saxton's map of Northumberland, published in the latter's atlas in 1579.¹⁵ Camden's brief description deserves to be quoted in full:

“Ad East-Alon ubi nunc Ould Town id est *vetus oppidum* cernitur, floruit olim ALONE quod et ALIONE, ubi per lineam Muri Cohors tertia Nerviorum cum suo Tribuno egit.”

That is to say, “By East Allen, where Old Town, i.e. ancient city,¹⁶ is now seen, there once flourished ALONE, otherwise known as ALIONE, where the third cohort of Nervians with its tribune was stationed.” Taking the place-name to imply that the site was an ancient one, and noting that it stood beside the river then usually spelt Alon, Camden thought it reasonable to identify it as the *Alone* of the tenth Antonine Iter and the *Alione* of the Notitia Dignitatum, which gives the third cohort of Nervians as the latter's garrison. But in his 1607 edition Camden abandoned the identification; for in the meantime Reginald Bainbrigg of Appleby had sent him a copy of the Whitley Castle inscription set up by *coh. II Nerviorum*,¹⁷ and Camden (as Haverfield first showed in CW² xi, 359) amended the numeral to *III* and transferred the

¹⁴ P. 719.

¹⁵ Cf. Dr. Whitaker's *Descriptive list of the maps of Northumberland* (1949) 1 and plate facing.

¹⁶ It must be remembered that Camden was writing for foreign readers who could not be expected to know the meaning of English place-names unless he translated them into Latin. ¹⁷ C 310, cf. *Ephemeris Epigraphica* ix, 566.

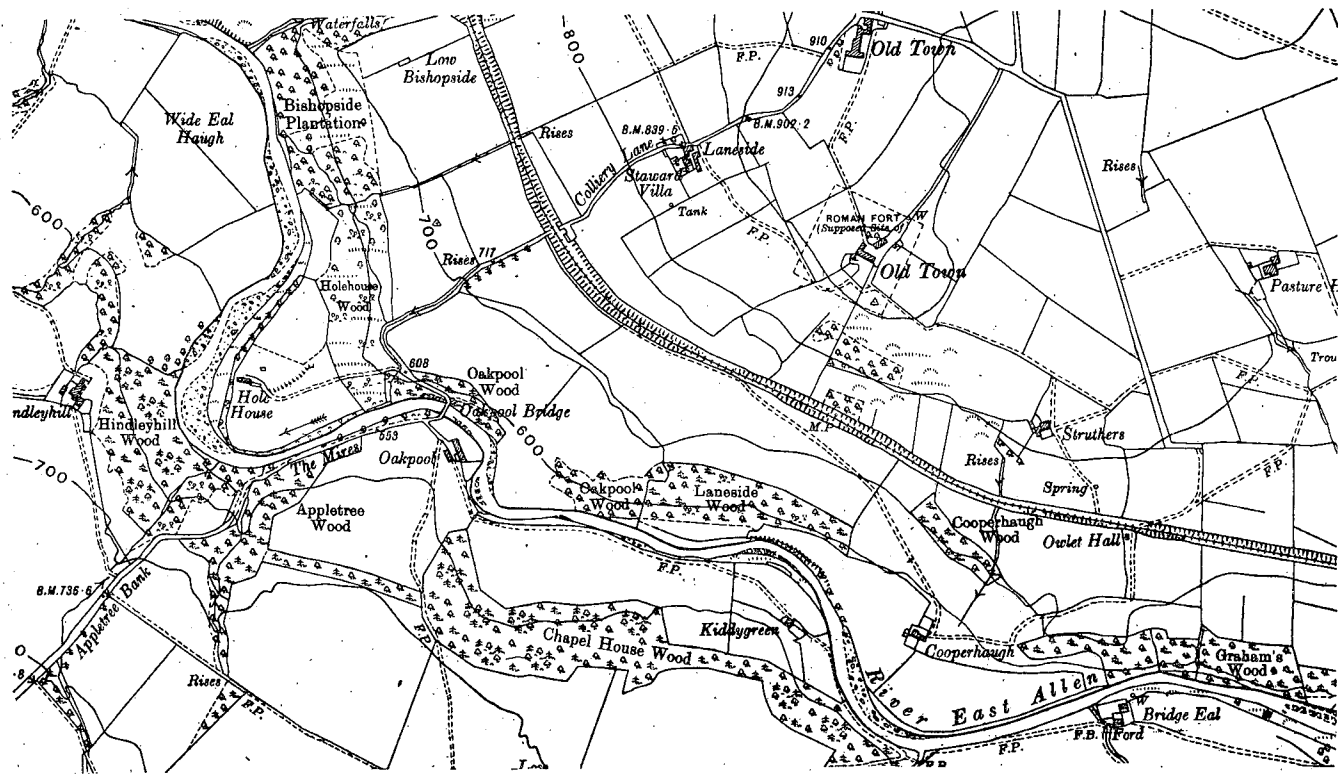


FIG. 3.

(Reproduced by permission from the 6-inch Ordnance Survey Map.)

Notitia place-name to Whitley Castle: he was therefore obliged to seek a new Roman name for Old Town, but found the task too much for him, and omitted all reference to the matter.¹⁸ Camden, then, is the originator of the identification of Old Town as a Roman site, but it is tolerably clear that he had nothing but the place-name and the river-name to go on; it was ninety years before further evidence was adduced.

The preface to Gibson's first edition (1695) of Camden's *Britannia* shows that the editor was indebted, for the Additions to the chapter on Northumberland, to "Mr. William Nicolson, Archdeacon of the same Church" (sc. Carlisle)—later famous as the Bishop Nicolson who published the Border Laws and who kept the voluminous and often entertaining diaries, copious extracts from which have been published by the Cumberland and Westmorland society.¹⁹ Nicolson's paragraph on Old Town, at p. 869, reads as follows:

"Old-town seems more likely to be the *Alone* of *Antoninus* (in the *Liber Notitiarum*, *Alione*) than any other place which has hitherto been thought on. It answers best the distances both from *Galana* (*sic*) and *Galacum*; and many Roman antiquities, which have been found there, strengthen the conjecture. The name of the river also, whereon 'tis seated, argues as strongly for this place as *West-Alon* can do for *Whitley*."

Nicolson's reference to "many Roman antiquities" is tantalizing; his whole record is such that we are bound to hear his testimony with respect, but it must be admitted that stronger evidence is required to prove that a Roman site in fact existed at Old Town.

Our next source is Warburton. Sir George Macdonald, in his 1932 Horsley memorial lecture,²⁰ felt bound to draw a most unfavourable picture of Warburton as an antiquary and as a man; but in this particular case we shall find reason

¹⁸ 1607 ed., p. 660: "Ad *East-Alon* vicus nunc *Ould Towne*, i. *vetus oppidum* cernitur."

¹⁹ CW² i, 1f., ii 155f., iii 1f., iv 1f., v 1f., xxxv 80f. and xlvii 191f.

²⁰ AA⁴ x, 40f.

to give him a higher rating. He describes the site in a letter to Gale; dated 21 November, 1717, but first published in 1776:²¹

"Old Town, in Alondale, exactly answers the distance allotted to it by Antoninus, hath a port-way seven yards broad, all paved with stone, ranging between them (sc. Portgate and Old Town), its situation on an eminence on the very brink of the river Alon, and of a square figure intrenched; and if we may give credit to the author of the additions to Camden's *Britannia*, hath produced several Roman antiquities. . . ."

The description of the site admirably fits the southern Old Town farm of the six-inch map, here reproduced as fig. 3; Warburton cites Nicolson's Roman antiquities with due caution; and for his identification of a Roman road there is the powerful and unequivocal support of Horsley, the next writer to be quoted.

Horsley's discussion of the site is put off balance by his wrestling with the problem of identifying his series of supporting stations, south of the Wall.²² It was his notion of a road from Lanchester in County Durham to Old Town which was to bring the fiercest criticisms from John Hodgson,²³ but what he had to say about the site itself, and its other road-links, is worth serious attention:²⁴

"At Old town, near Catten beacon, on Alon-water, there are some ruins and remains of antiquity, and this I take to be *Galava*. This place Mr. Warburton, in his map, supposed to be *Alone*. . . . This station is not near so considerable, nor the ruins of it so certain or so large, as either that at *Lanchester* or *Whitley castle*; which agrees very well with its not being mentioned in the *Notitia*, as having then been neglected. . . . The uncertainty there is about the military way, is the greatest difficulty that attends this part of my scheme. I have heard of a causeway on the moors, that seems to point towards *Lanchester* one way, and *Old town* the other; but there is some just suspicion of its being too modern. . . . This military way (if real) would near *Old*

²¹ Hutchinson, *History of Northumberland* p. 115.

²² On that question it will be sufficient now to refer to R. G. Collingwood's wise comments in the 1937 Horsley lecture, AA⁴ xv, 22f.

²³ *Poems written at Lanchester* (1807) 69; HN 73, 162, 230, 244.

²⁴ *Britannia Romana* (1732) 453.

town fall at a proper angle on the other branch, which seems to have come from the *Maiden way* near *Whitley castle*, and is very visible near *Old town*, and continues so for some few miles, but seems to point towards *Hexham*. . . . As this military way is absolutely certain, I have chose to express it in the map, rather than the other, and leave every one to judge as he sees fit."

Horsley, then, saw ruins which might well be Roman and a road, seeming to run from Whitley Castle towards Hexham, of whose Roman date he had no doubts; his map, here reproduced as fig. 4,²⁵ makes his meaning absolutely clear: It shows two Old Towns (as does the modern one-inch map), one by the West Allen and one by the East, though the former is wrongly shown south and not north of the river; and it indicates the presence of a Roman fort close to the Old Town on East Allen—but, surprisingly, the fort-symbol is placed on the west bank of the river and not where the two modern farms of that name stand close together (fig. 3), high on the eastern bluff overlooking the East Allen, just as Warburton described it. It seems best to suppose that in this case, as in a number of others, Horsley's draughtsman was at fault, rather than that Horsley himself meant to place the Roman site across the river; if that had been the case, he would surely have said so in his text, for that would have involved moving it from Warburton's "eminence on the very brink of the river" to a lower slope, with no very obvious suitability for a fort-site.

Among later writers Wallis and John Hodgson stand out as critics of Horsley (for the parts played by Camden, Nicolson and Warburton were underestimated if not forgotten). Wallis was the first and most outspoken critic, in his *History of Northumberland* (1769) ii, 34:

"There is not the least memorial of its being a *Roman* station, as supposed by Mr. *Horsley*, either by funeral-stones, altars, inscriptions, coins, or foundations of buildings; not even a tradition from any body on the spot of its being of *Roman* original."

²⁵ From the plate facing p. 380 of the *Britannia Romana*.

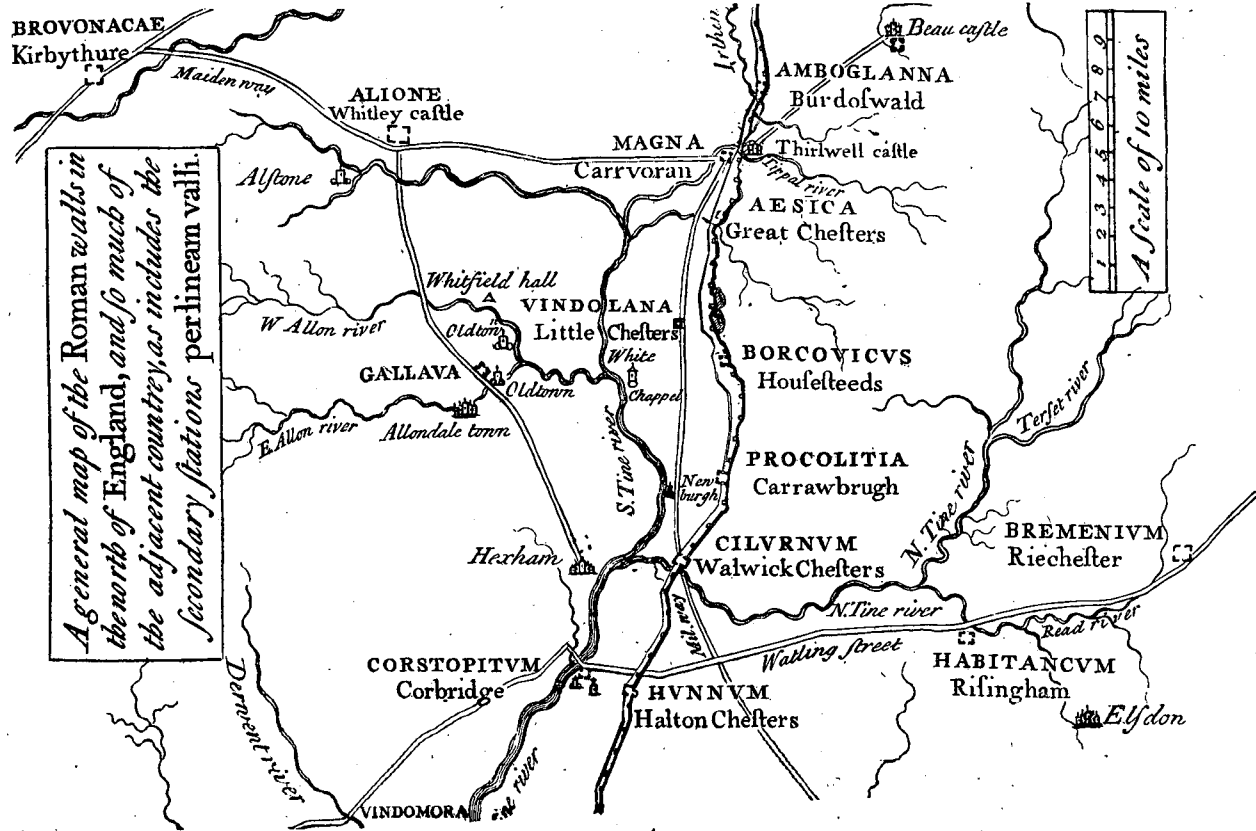


FIG. 4.

(From Horsley, *Britannia Romana*.)

Hodgson's considered judgment is more cautious but equally adverse:²⁶

"I searched all about Old Town, in company with my late antiquarian friend, Mr. Hedley, for appearance of a Roman town, but without discovering a stone, trench, or vestige of any kind. . . ."

There is only one further writer who deserves mention, namely Collingwood Bruce. He had paid at least one visit to Old Town before 1851, when he referred to it in the first edition of his *magnum opus*;²⁷ at that time he was inclined to think that Horsley had been right and that Hodgson's criticisms were unjustified—but two years later he suggested that Allendale Town was perhaps a more likely site for a Roman station,²⁸ and thereafter he does not seem to have given the matter any further thought.

I myself have had insufficient opportunity to examine the area round the two farms, to be able to take sides in the matter, but Horsley's account surely justifies further investigation; we must hope that a chance find or an air-photograph may one day provide further evidence, or that the unpublished portions of Nicolson's diaries may yield particulars of those "many Roman antiquities". But there is still a little more to be said about the road which Horsley called "absolutely certain".

§7. *The Roman road through Allendale.*

Horsley, as we have seen, considered that this road ran from Whitley Castle towards Hexham, and marked it so on his map (fig. 4). I have been unable to come upon a copy of Warburton's 1716 map, but in his *Vallum Romanum* (1753) he includes at p. 152 a brief description of the road:

"Another military way passes from this place (sc. Corbridge) south-west through *Dilston-park*, over *Hexham-fell*, to *Old Town* in *Alondale*, and meets with the maiden way at *Whitley-castle*, as may be seen in my large map of Northumberland."

²⁶ HN 244.

²⁷ RW¹ 349.

²⁸ RW² 327.

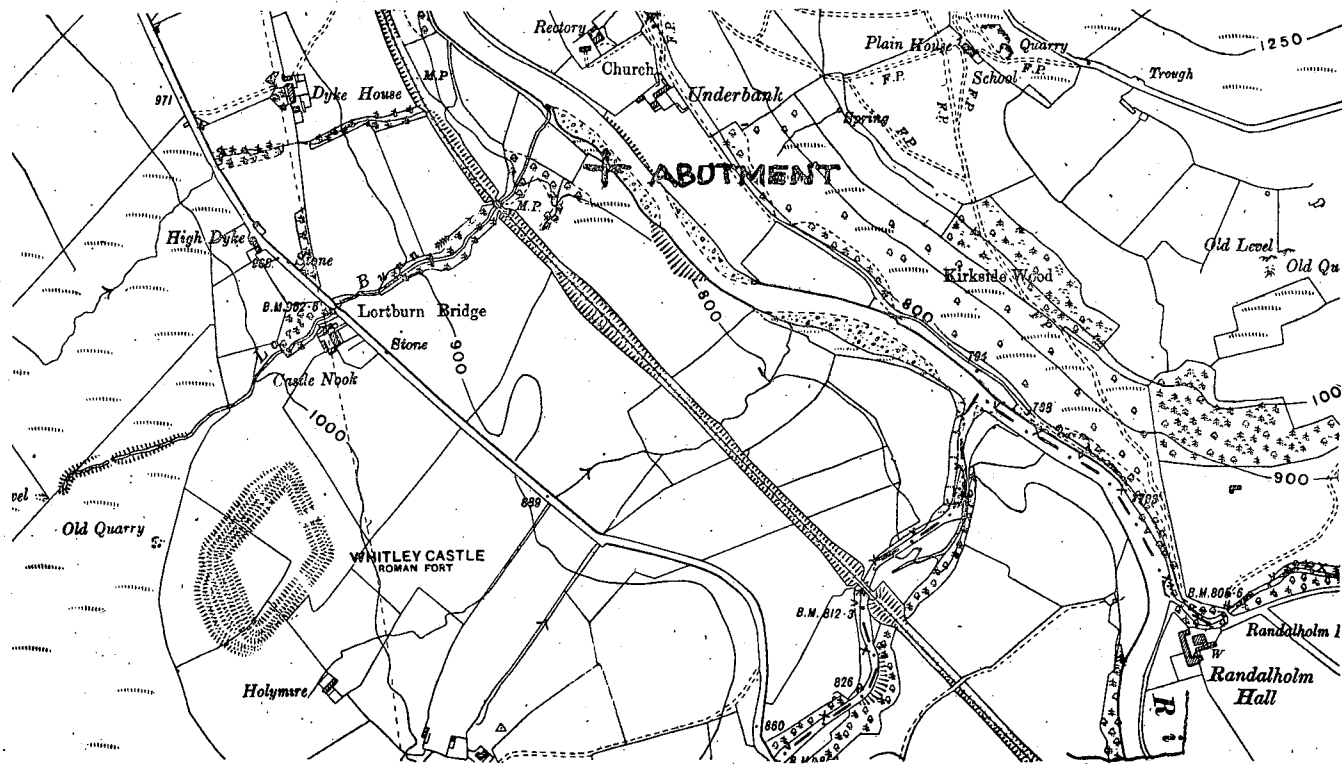


FIG. 5.

(Reproduced by permission from the 6-inch Ordnance Survey Map.)

As far as I can trace, the only later work to take note of this description is the second edition of Mackenzie's *History of Northumberland* (1825) ii, 304 (the passage is perhaps identifiable as one of the additions for which Mackenzie expresses thanks in his preface to "the Rev. Anthony Hedley, of Whitfield"²⁹); but I am inclined to think that Warburton has hit upon the truth.

Maclauchlan, in his *Survey of the Watling Street* (1852) p. 20, quotes the evidence of Thomas Harle, a drainer, for the existence of an ancient road which ran south-westwards from Corstopitum, crossing the Devil's Water at Dilston mill, where "piers of an ancient bridge" were still standing, and running onwards for about 60 yards on the south of Park south farm "and thence by a bend towards the wood"; this line remains to be tested by the spade, but Mr. Percy Hedley tells me that in a dry summer parts of it are still traceable on the surface. This surely suffices, with the evidence of Horsley and Warburton, to state a strong case for the existence of a Roman road, connecting the lead mines of Alston Moor, and the fort which watched over them, with the military depot at Corbridge through which much of the lead may have had to pass; but there is yet another link to be added to the growing chain of evidence.

It must be more than twenty years since R. C. Bosanquet drew my attention to the ruined remains of an ancient bridge abutment, on the haugh beside the west bank of South Tyne, nearly opposite Underbank farm and some 650 yards from the north angle of Whitley Castle fort (fig. 5). He pointed out that there is no evidence for a bridge having stood there in medieval times, let alone later, and that the surviving masonry would accord well with Roman origin; and if the bridge was Roman, it must surely have been built to carry a road into Allendale. As one stands beside the abutment and looks at the steep eastern slope, across the river, one's eye is taken by the prominent double zig-zag of an ancient road, climbing the hill—and inviting the field-survey which I my-

²⁹ RW² i, p. iv; cf. also AA⁴ xiii, 164f.

self have never had an opportunity of undertaking, but which it is the purpose of the present note to stimulate. There must inevitably be a great deal of work in the field before the Allendale road can find a secure place on the Ordnance Survey map of Roman Britain. The nature of much of the terrain is such that a series of air photographs would be needed to make such work reasonably practicable; I hope that the evidence collected in the present note may persuade someone to undertake the task in due course.³⁰

The present main road through Allendale represents the turnpike made under authority of an act of parliament passed in 1778, with various improvements of its line effected in 1824 and the following years;³¹ the investigation of its Roman predecessor will have to take those two programmes of road-construction into account. It was conceivably in the course of the second one that a group of Roman bronze vessels came to light, in a peat-moss north of Whitfield Hall, some years before 1840, for the discovery is recorded in the last volume of Hodgson's *History of Northumberland*;³² such a find, of course, has no necessary bearing on the line followed by the Roman road, but it may at least serve to confirm that Roman troops did pass through Allendale: for there is no doubt that the vessels are standard Roman military equipment.³³

³⁰ Codrington's *Roman Roads in Britain* (p. 151 of the third edition) purports to give a detailed account of the western portion of a Roman road from Whitley Castle through Allendale, but cites no authority for it: "It crossed the South Tyne about a mile and a half north of Alston, and its course is now followed by a highway over Willyshaw Rigg, and a track onwards to the West Allen river, which it crossed on the south of Whitfield Hall. It crossed the East Allen to Oldtown. . . ." He shows no knowledge of the evidence relating to its course farther east, and it seems probable that his description is based on Warburton's and Horsley's maps, taken in conjunction with those of the modern ordnance survey.

³¹ HN 105.

³² HN 105; RW¹ 444 (=RW² 435) calls them "recently found" (and only gives their find-spot as "near to Whitfield"), and that is doubtless why in AA² xv, 370, they are said to have been found "about the year 1851".

³³ Bruce illustrates two of them, including a splendid specimen of a strainer, on pl. xvii of RW¹; for the type it will be sufficient now to refer to AA⁴ xiii, 139f., but the hope may be expressed that the Whitfield specimens, which have been in our museum for almost a century, may before long be worthily published.