

Roman Names for Roman Sites in North West England

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The discovery in 1995 on the beach at Ravenglass of bronze fragments of a Roman soldier's demobilisation certificate (1) served to open again the question of the names assigned to known Roman sites in north-west England. The soldier to whom the certificate belonged served in an infantry unit raised by Hadrian from the fleet (*Cohors I Aelia Classica*). This was the second piece of evidence linking this unit of the Roman army with the fort at Ravenglass;(2) amongst the finds from the excavations of 1976-77 was a lead sealing (from an official package) which bore its name in an abbreviated form. Whilst it might be (and, indeed, has been) argued that a fort is unlikely to produce a sealing of its own garrison unit, (3) it should be remembered that Lancaster has produced one of the *Ala Sebosiana*, which is attested epigraphically at the site. (4)

The *Notitia Dignitatum*,(5) a document which purports to give information on military dispositions in the third and fourth centuries, assigns *Cohors I Aelia Classica* to a site named *Tunnocelum*. The *Notitia* gives the names of military units and their locations for the area under the control of Legion VI at York. However, it has long been realised that the listing do not cohere into any recognisable strategic or geographical order, making it impossible to identify sequences. Ravenglass has for a long time been identified with *Glannibanta* (of the *Notitia Dignitatum*), which in its turn is taken to be *Clanoventa*, which stands at the beginning of Route X of the *Antonine Itinerary*,(6) and *Cantiventi* (of the *Ravenna Cosmography*). (7) The form of the name, *Clanoventa*, has been interpreted as 'the market by the clear water', which seemed to suit the coastal location of Ravenglass. However, the coincidence of the sealing and the demobilisation certificate seems to point to the name, *Tunnocelum*, as more appropriate to Ravenglass.

A problem, however, has been seen to lie in the similarity of *Tunnocelum* with the estuary given in the *Geographia* (8) of Claudius Ptolemaeus (Ptolemy of Alexandria) as *Ituna*; Ptolemy's reference makes it very likely that the *Ituna* estuary should be identified with Solway. There is, however, no site, with the exception of Bowness which would appear suitable for a site 'on the promontory of *Ituna*'; and Bowness appears from the sequence on the Rudge Cup (9) to be securely identified as *Maia*. Attempts to argue that Bowness may have been an 'afterthought', and that the original end of the Wall and thus the location of *Maia* - was Drumburgh are not convincing.(10) Excavations at Bowness do nothing to throw into doubt its Hadrianic date; (11) further, there is some evidence to suggest that Drumburgh, in fact, might be the 'afterthought'. The only other possibility that avoids placing *Tunnocelum* at Ravenglass is that it may be a site that is as yet unlocated. Clearly, there must be such sites, but to assign a name to one of them appears to be unsound; recently, indeed, *Galava* has been attributed to a suspected, but unlocated, site at Beetham. (12)

If, therefore, we accept that *Tunnocelum* and Ravenglass are one and the same, we are left with the task of re-attributing names in the northern section of Route X of the *Antonine Itinerary*-*Clanoventa*, *Galava*, *Alone*, *Galacum*; the next name in the sequence, *Bremetennacum*, is securely located on epigraphic grounds at Ribchester,(13) with *Clanoventa* at Ravenglass, *Galava* has been taken as Ambleside, *Alone* as Watercrock, and *Galacum* as Burrow in Lonsdale. However, the need to find a new location for *Clanoventa* re-opens the locations of the names that follow.

We learn from an inscription, which was found at Bolton le Sands,(14) that *Ialonus* was the name of a deity who evidently presided over the fertility of the Lune valley, and who may in fact have been the presiding spirit 'personification' of the river Lune itself. In these circumstances, it would appear perverse to ascribe a place name (*Alone*) which is in effect the god's name, to a site on the river Kent, that is, Watercrock.

Indeed, there would be a great deal of sense in placing the trio of names (*Galava*, *Alone*, *Galacum*) as a sequence on the river Lune namely, Low Borrow Bridge, Burrow in Lonsdale, and Lancaster. From Lancaster, the route then proceeds logically to Ribchester.

We are then left with having to find a new location for *Clanoventa*. One possibility might be Brougham, although this appears to be properly interpreted as *Broccavum* of Route V. The most reasonable alternative would then be Ambleside. Intermittent work at Ambleside (15) over the last two decades has pointed up the likely significance of this site for commercial and storage purposes its large granaries, what appears to be an extensive extra-mural settlement, and its position at the head of Windermere.

If the lake was utilised as a significant route for transportation, (16) then Ambleside would be a significant centre 'the market by the clear water'.

Under these circumstances, provisions could be stored in the large granaries for shipment on to other points, and artisans would be attracted into the extra-mural settlement in the hope of reaping the rewards of a flourishing business location.

Although not a great deal of excavation has taken place at most of the sites concerned, enough has been done for the establishment of broad chronologies; these indicate that all of the sites in question were in use at the likely time of compilation of the *Antonine Itinerary* (that is, the first quarter of the third century).

The *Ravenna Cosmography*, a document of the seventh century, also seems to have originated as a 'road map'; it describes the routes that 'radiate' from centres.

Notes

1. P. Holder, A Roman Military Diploma from Ravenglass, Cumbria, Bulletin of the John Ryland s Library 79 (1997) 3-41
2. T.W. Potter, The Romans in North-west England (Kendal 1979), 73f
3. I.G. Smith, Some Roman Place-names in Lancashire and Cumbria, Britannia 28 (1997), 379
4. G.D.E. Jones and D.C.A. Shotton, Roman Lancaster, (Manchester 1988), 214
5. R. Goodburn and P. Bartholomew (Eds), Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum (Oxford 1976)
6. A.L.F. Rivet, The British Section of the Antonine Itinerary, Britannia 1 (1970), 34-82

However, confusion is caused because when a route has been described, the document does not evidently repeat the name of the route centre before proceeding on to another route.

Thus, from Manchester (*Mautio*) routes lead to *Caluvio* (probably *Galacum* of the *Antonine Itinerary*, and thus Lancaster) and to *Bresmetenacum Veteranorum* (Ribchester). Lancaster then becomes the centre for a route which goes to *Galluvio* (probably Low Borrow Bridge), and another to *Medibogdo*, *Cantiventi*, *Iuliocanon* and *Gabrocentio*.

This would allow *Medibogdo* ('fort in the middle of a bow') to be identified with Watercrock, the disposition of which in a deep bow of the river Kent well fits the name. This means, of course, that *Medibogdo* can no longer be associated with Hardknott, which was probably in any case too short lived to merit a place on the listing. After Watercrock comes *Cantiventi* (presumably the same name as *Clanoventa*, and thus Ambleside). *Iuliocanon* is probably *Tunnocelum* and Ravenglass. *Gabrocentio* may be Moresby, although there is a possibility on the basis of casual finds of Roman material that one or more coastal sites intervene between Ravenglass and Moresby.

Ultimately, of course, our problems in making these interpretations are caused by a lack of chronological information about the sites, and by the absence from most of them of inscriptions which specifically name them. It is an interesting coincidence that the stated purpose of one of the earliest excavation projects of the CWAA Society at Low Borrow Bridge in 1883 was the acquisition of inscriptions which would settle the issue of the Roman name of the site. More than a century on, we are only a little wiser and still speculating.

7. I.A. Richmond and O.G.S. Crawford, The British Section of the Ravenna Cosmography, Archaeologia 93 (1949) 1-50
8. Geographia II, 3,3
9. I.A. Richmond, The Rudge Cup, Archaeologia Aeliana 12 (1935), 334-342
10. I.G. Smith, art. cit., 379f
11. T.W. Potter op cit. y 321ff
12. I.G. Smith art. cit., 378
13. RIB 583
14. RIB 600
15. R.H. Leech, The Roman Fort and Vicus at Ambleside, Transactions of CWAAS 93 (1993), 51-74
16. D.C.A. Shotton, The Romans in South Cumbria, Transactions of CWAAS (1995), 73-77