

Appendix to Papers on Ancient Sepulchral
Remains.

BY THE REV. H. M. SCARTH.

WHILE the account contained in the former part of this journal was going through the press, my attention was called to another discovery of two stone coffins, at Coombe Down, on the same piece of ground as the former, but 47 feet more to the north. The coffins being placed as the former—north and south, and the pair lying together; the head of each coffin being turned towards the north, and the feet towards the south, this being also the position of the skeleton within each.

The length of coffin (marked I) is about 6 feet 3 inches outside, and 6 feet inside, roughly hewn, and the upper end very irregular in form. The width about the centre, 20 inches, and tapering towards the feet. In this was found a skeleton entire, with a small coin lying on the lower jaw, which was discoloured by the coin becoming corroded. The coin, which is small brass, is illegible, but appears to be Roman. A nail is said to have been driven into the upper jaw, as if the lips had been fastened by it. At the feet of this skeleton, and within the coffin, were found

three skulls, but no other parts of the bodies. Outside the coffin, however, on the east side, were found bones, which appeared to belong to these skeletons, but without skulls. The cover of this coffin was composed of 4 pieces of stone; the portion which covered the head and breast was plain, and in shape adapted to the coffin; the length 2 feet 10 inches, and breadth 22 inches. The middle and lower portions of the coffin was covered with a stone regularly cut, and with a margin round it, and an inscription within the margin, which, on being examined, proved to be in latin, and commemorated the restoration of a building; this stone had been afterwards adapted to the purpose of the coffin-lid. The inscription is given below, with a drawing of the stone and letters on it, and the rendering of them, which I believe to be accurate. The inscription has nothing whatever to do with the interment. Two small stones made out the length of the coffin.

At the distance of 2 feet 5 inches from this coffin, lay another (marked J), the length of which was 7 feet outside, and 6 feet 4 inches inside; it was covered with a stone formed of one piece originally, but now broken in the middle; the thickness of this lid is 8 inches; the length 6 feet 2 inches, and breadth 2 feet 2 inches. Within this coffin was a skeleton of large size, the thigh bone measuring 1 foot 6 inches in length and 4 inches in girth. The length of the jaw 6 inches, the teeth in excellent preservation, being very large and one of them decayed, and the skull $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch thick. Both these skeletons had the face turned upward, or rather reclining on one side. The coffin No. 2 tapered as usual towards the feet; the skeleton was entire. In these coffins were found, as in the preceding ones, small iron studs, united together by thin plates, and long thin nails.



The most curious and important part of this discovery is the inscription contained on a portion of the lid of the coffin, marked (I). This will help us to approximate towards the probable date of these interments.

The Plate opposite is a correct drawing of the stone, which is engraved also in the last number of the *Journal of the Archæological Institute*, and to the kindness of the secretaries, I am indebted for the engraving, which is very faithful, with a single exception. The word "Antonini" at the commencement of the second line appears to have been written with two N's, thus ANTONNINI, this seems afterwards to have been altered by the stone-cutter, and a small *ι* inserted above the N in the third syllable, and the last N converted into PI, as there is a slight curved indentation in the stone. In the engraving, the P is given very marked, whereas in the stone, the N is most decided, and the curved part of the P comparatively faint, although distinctly to be traced.

The inscription may be read as follows:—

PRO SALUTE IMPERATORIS CAESARIS
 MARCI AURELII
 ANTONINI PII FELICIS INVICTI
 AUGUSTI NÆVIUS AUGUSTI
 LIBERTUS ADJUTOR PROCURATORUM
 PRINCIPIA
 RUINA OPPRESSA A SOLO RESTITUIT.

and thus translated:—

For the safety of the Emperor, Cæsar, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the Pious, Fortunate, and Invincible, Augustus, Nævius, the Freedman of Augustus, and the Assistant of the Procurators, restored these chief military quarters which had fallen to ruin.

I am indebted to Dr. Bruce, the learned historian of the Roman wall, and a most accurate investigator of Roman inscriptions, for elucidating what has, from the first, been the chief difficulty in this inscription, *i.e.*, the word PRINCIPIA in the fourth line, which was at first read PRIMARIUS, and the word PROVINCIÆ, or PRETORIUM also suggested. A knot in the stone, (which is not quite accurately given in the plate), at the top of the right limb of the N, between it and the C, which is only faintly traceable, occasioned the difficulty. Dr. Bruce has given the following valuable remarks on the inscription which I here insert from the *Archæological Journal*, (No. 45, p. 93.) “The first question that arises here is respecting the Emperor specially addressed. I find that the names and epithets used in this inscription are in others applied both to Caracalla and Heliogabalus, with the exception of the word *invictus*, and in no other instance that I can find is this applied to either of these Emperors. I incline to Mr. Frank’s opinion, that Heliogabalus is the person here intended, for the following reasons:—

1. On the murder of Heliogabalus, his name seems to have been erased from inscriptions, or the slabs themselves thrown down. This stone having been used to cover a tomb, must have previously been removed from its original position.
2. From the indistinctness of some of the letters, the inscription seems not to have been deeply carved, this, together with the omission of the A in Cæsaris, and the occurrence of tied letters, seems to indicate the later rather than the earlier period.
3. Had Caracalla been the person intended, one of his well-known epithets, such as *Parthicus*, *Britannicus*, or *Germanicus*, would probably have occupied the place of *invictus*; so far as I have noticed Heliogabalus had gained no such distinctions: his

flatterers, therefore, on his assuming the purple, would have no resource left but to bestow upon him the indefinite title of *invictus*." In a private letter to myself, the Doctor also adds—"I wish I had seen your impression of the stone before I wrote to Mr. Way upon the subject; the sculptor has made more slips than I was aware of, all which make for the late rather than the earlier period."

The next thing which must be noticed is the name of the dedicator. The name NAEVIVS occurs in Gruter. It is not without interest to observe, that one of the examples furnished by that author (p. civ. No. 9) contains the epithet *adjutor* appended:—

TVTELAE
V. S.
P. NAEVIVS
ADJVTOR

The Nævius of the slab found in Bath was a Freedman of Augustus, and an assistant or secretary of the procurators of the province. We are not without an authority for the reading *Adjutor Procuratorum*. In Gruter, p. ccclxii., No. 8, the following occurs.

MEMORIAE, AVRELI
DEMETRI. ADJVTORI.
PROCC.

With reference to the office of Procurator, Dr. William Smith, in his Dictionary of Antiquities, Art. *Provincia*, has this remark, "No quæstors were sent to the provinces of the Cæsar. In the place of the quæstors, there were *Procuratores Cæsaris*, who were either equites or freedmen of the Cæsar. The procuratores looked after the taxes,

paid the troops, and generally were entrusted with the interests of the Fiscus.”

The individual in question was a *freedman of the Emperor*, and though at the time that the dedication was made he was only an assistant to the procurators, he might be in training for the personal assumption of the office. An inscription found at York, within Micklegate Bar, confirms the reading AVG LIB, Augusti Libeatus, it is as follows :

BRITANNLÆ
SANCTÆ
P. NICOMEDES
AVGG. N.N.
LIBERTVS.

It is a votive tablet erected to the Genius of Britain, by Publius Nicomedes, a freedman of the Augusti, probably of Severus and his son Caracalla. See Gough's *Camden*, vol. 3, p. 62.

Until the writer of these remarks had communicated with Dr. Bruce, he was inclined to refer the dedication of the inscription to Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the successor of Antoninus Pius; or to the Emperor Caracalla, the son of Severus, who is called in inscriptions Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. Thus, on the portico of the Pantheon at Rome, he is united with his father under these names, and is so styled in several inscriptions in this country. See an inscription found at Greta Bridge, Yorkshire; one found at Caerleon, Monmouthshire; and also at Reichester, Northumberland. Given in the *Mon. Hist. Brit.*, Insc. 16a and 39, and Horsley, p. 321 and 103, and xciv. p. 262. But the Doctor appears to him to have adduced satisfactory reasons for referring it rather to the Emperor Heliogabalus.

The Emperor Severus died at York, A.D. 211, and by his will left his empire to his two sons, Caracalla and

Geta. The latter was murdered by his brother Caracalla, who was himself assassinated at Edessa, by Macrinus, A.D. 217. Heliogabalus, after an infamous reign of three years, was put to death by his soldiers, A.D. 222; so that, to whichever of these Emperors this inscription is referred, we have only a difference of eleven years; and the date of the burials is no doubt some years posterior to either of these periods.

The word which has given most trouble in interpreting the reading of the slab, appears to be rightly explained by Dr. Bruce to be PRINCIPIA. The difficulty has arisen from the stone being damaged in this part. Dr. Bruce observes "we are necessarily driven to conjecture, in order to supply the vacuity between the N and the I at the end of the fourth line," where there is the faint mark of a curved letter, most probably part of a C. The inscription speaks of the restoration of something which had become ruinous. The other words of the inscription are perfectly intelligible, and this is the only word doubtful, yet upon it rests the determination of the object to which the building was dedicated. In the station at Lanchester a slab has been found (Horsley, Durham No. xii.) containing on its third and fourth lines the following words:—

PRINCIPIA ET ARMEN
TARIA CONLAPSA RESTITVIT

Here, as Dr. Bruce observes, "we have evidence that there was a class of buildings, called *Principia*, which, like other buildings would fall into ruin and require restoration. The only letters which are difficult to trace are, the first I in the word, which seems to have been attached to the top of the left limb of the N; and the C," the curved portion of which can most certainly be traced.

The word *Principia* has been thus explained; see *Facciolati* in verb. *Principium*:—"Principia — orum; Locus in castris, ubi erat Prætorium, et tabernacula legatorum et tribunorum militum, et signa legionum; et ubi conciones militares et concilia habebantur, jus dicebatur, sacra fiebant. 'Αρχαία. ita dictus vel quod ibi Principes ac duces exercitus tenderent (had their tents pitched), vel quod in castris metandis *principio* designaretur, postea reliqua castra."

Any who are desirous of further information on this point, I would refer to *Lipsius de militia Romana*, lib. quintus. See edition printed at Antwerp, 1598, pp. 230, 231.

Dr. Bruce observes that the word may probably here be translated *Officers' Barracks*.

We ought next to try to determine the spot from whence the slab was taken; it certainly seems to show that there was a military station near. By the assistance of the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society, I have been enabled to make some excavations on the site of a building near at hand, which, from the remains, appears certainly to have been Roman; Roman coins having been dug up, as well as roofing-tiles and nails. The remains of a glass unguentory, and coarse baked pottery. This appears to have been an oblong building, placed north and south, the total length of which is 81 feet by 18 feet, and is composed of two compartments, one smaller than the other, and separated by a partition wall. At some distance below this is a fine spring of water, where an arched bath seems to have been constructed; there is, however, no appearance of a fortified camp that I can detect, and it may be doubted if the inscription belonged to this building, the purpose of which I am unable to decide.

It has been a subject of doubt if Bath was in Roman times a military station. The finding this slab leads to the supposition, that, in the near neighbourhood of Bath, if not in the city itself, was a station.

I find that in April, 1822, stone coffins were discovered also at Coombe Down, near the site of these last, and that they lie in the same position as those already mentioned. The remains of a Roman station, near the spot, are also said to have been examined by the Rev. R. Warner, who traced the walls:—"The two places laid open appeared to be parts of distinct structures, at a distance of 30 or 40 yards asunder. That of the highest and most considerable, if we may judge from the ridges in the turf which appeared to mark out the continuance of it, formed the outline, in the shape of a parallelogram, the usual form of *campi explorativi*, but from its diminutive size, about 40 paces long by 25 broad, it would seem to be the foundation of a building, perhaps a prætorium or *temple*."—Extract from the *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, April, 1822.

Time and further excavations in this very interesting spot, may reveal more that is of historical value. It is however, not a little gratifying to the writer of this notice on Stone Coffins, that the investigation of these curious remains should have led to the discovery of an inscription of such deep interest. Had former discoveries been accurately examined, no doubt other inscriptions might have been preserved from destruction, which would have thrown light upon the history of our native country, and the manners and habits of the times.

Many curious facts have come to his knowledge since he commenced this enquiry, but if they were recorded, the length of this communication would be unduly extended; he will hope, therefore, to produce them on some

future occasion, and content himself with a simple enumeration.

In 1819, in the parish of Bathwick, where the stone coffin before mentioned was found, there were discovered 20 human skeletons lying together—some on one side, and others on their faces—and in one of the skulls a large iron nail was found driven quite through the crown. Near one of the skeletons, a copper box, nearly in the form of an inkstand, and opening with a spring, was discovered; it contained eight small *Roman* coins, all of the lower empire. A large fibula of fine brass was likewise dug up, the top of which was shaped like a cross, composed of three balls. Three coins were likewise dug up, one of which was of the city of Constantinople. About 40 yards distant was found, at the same time, a *leaden* coffin, with the head lying towards the *east*, containing a perfect human male skeleton.* The box discovered was of copper, about 2½ inches high, divided into two by the upper part (1 inch high) drawing off. The fibula was of brass, gilt, of a handsome but common form, and supposed to be Roman.

In 1823, on Bathwick Hill, where Mr. Wallinger's house now stands, at a small depth from the surface, a stone coffin was also discovered, lying north and south, rudely finished; the cover formed of various stones, which appeared to have been disturbed, and the skull of the person interred taken out, and thrown on the outside, near the feet. The remaining bones were found in the coffin, and with them several fragments of earthen cups, and a larger one of Samian ware, used for libations, and fallen in two. A Roman coin, of small brass, was found near the coffin; also a glass bead, the size of a marble, perforated; and a

* A stone coffin lined with lead has lately been found at Caerwent. See *Archæological Journal*, No. 45, p. 76.

small brass hook, apparently part of a larger article, calculated to confine some part of the dress. A few yards from the coffin was picked up a small silver coin, which was supposed to be British or Gaulish. The coin was about the size of the Roman denarius, disked; on the obverse a rude head, on the reverse a poise.

In 1815, a stone coffin and lid of another were found at Walcot, near Messrs. Sainsbury's brewery; and with them an urn, of lemon-colored tint; two fragments of Samian pottery; also coins of Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Domitian, Carausius, and Constantine. Either the Claudius or Vespasian was found *inside* the coffin, but which coin is now uncertain.

It will be remembered that Dr. Musgrave, in his *Belgium Britannicum*, devotes a portion of his work to these curious remains, and makes mention where they had been found in his time; and endeavours to trace their origin, giving also a drawing of one. He does not, however, attempt to determine their date. They appear to have been used very early, as Plutarch relates that Numa was buried in a stone coffin, and his laws in another. He says, "They did not burn the body, because he forbade it; but they made two stone coffins, and buried him under the janiculum; the one containing his body, and the other the sacred books which he had written."—Plutarch, *Vita Numæ*. Thus we find them very early in use.

We find them also in use after the time of Marcus Aurelius Antonius, and resting upon the remains of Roman buildings, and also covered with the remains of a Roman edifice, as at Coombe Down; yet quite distinct from Christian usage, in their position and accompaniments. We may, therefore, probably regard them of very different dates; but I am inclined to think these found at Coombe

Down may be applied to the period between the departure of the Romans and coming of the Saxons, or the Roman-British period. As a fact corroborative of this, I may mention that stone coffins were found above the ancient Roman baths at Bath, and resting on the flooring of the baths. They are described in Dr. Lucas' work on the Bath waters; he considered them to be Saxon, but it may be doubted if this idea is correct, as no such coffins have (as far as I can discover) been found in ancient Saxon cemeteries, neither can they be regarded as Christian. The position of the coffins, north and south, and the coin in the mouth of the corpse, forbid this supposition. For this reason I am inclined to believe them to be Romano-British.

NOTE.

I have lately been informed that there is in the Museum of Roman Antiquities at Mayence, a curious instance of the adaptation of a Roman monument to the purpose of a Frankish coffin. This is a circumstance somewhat similar to what has been found at Coombe Down; and the only other instance that I recollect of a like adaptation was one shewn me by that excellent antiquary, the Rev. James Raine, of Durham, who found a Roman altar converted to the purpose of a Christian grave-stone, in the burial ground of a cathedral; the upper portion exposed to the weather being entirely worn away, but the part which had been buried remained perfect. It is now in the Museum of Antiquities in the Chapter Library.

It may not here be out of place to remark, that two human skeletons have lately been discovered at Pierce-bridge, on the river Tees, an ancient Roman station, each with a small earthen jar placed on the breast.

