XVIII. *Observations on the Situation of Camulodunum, in a Letter from Thomas Walford, Esq. F.A.S. to Samuel Lysons, Esq. F.R.S. Director.*

Read Nov. 26, 1807.

DEAR SIR,

Birdbrooke, Essex, Nov. 19, 1807.

VARIOUS have been the opinions respecting the site of *Camulodunum*, the first colony of the Romans in Britain. Camden, Gibson, Horsley, and Mr. Reynolds place it at Malden; Richard of Cirencester, Dr. Stukely, Bishop Stillingfleet, Baxter, Morant, Dr. Mason,^a Mr. Gough,^b Drake,^c and the Rev. Mr. Leman,^d with more propriety at Colchester, as the following quotations and personal observations, I hope, will sufficiently demonstrate.

All agree that Colchester was the *Colonia*, which is saying no more than that Colchester was a colony; it probably might have been called *Colonia*, till there were other colonies; then it became necessary to distinguish it, as Richard of Cirencester has done, by adding its proper name *Camulodunum*, not *Camalodunum*, as Camden would have it.

Camden's etymology has occasioned the confusion respecting the situation of this Roman city; but is it proper to place any confidence in his opinion? when he candidly tells you, "I must observe once for all, that the ancient places in this county are involved in such obscurity, that whatever discoveries I may have made in other counties, *in this I am totally at a loss.*"^e Is not this acknowledging that he knew

^a Dr. Mason's M.S. where he wonders that Malden should ever have been thought of.

^b Mr. Gough's edit. of Camden.

^c *Archaeologia*, Vol. v. p. 137.

^d *Gentleman's Magazine* for August, 1795, page 630. This gentleman's knowledge of the Roman remains in Britain, if equalled, is perhaps not surpassed by any of his contemporaries.

^e Camden's *Britannia*, Vol. ii. p. 41.

nothing of the situation of the Stations, or Roman Roads, in Essex? Allowing him the greatest antiquarian knowledge, with the best intention, what are we to expect from an etymologist, who writes in his closet without examining the objects of his inquiries, but erroneous ideas frequently asserted with dogmatical diction? which, I think, is sufficiently evident, when he speaks thus of Malden, as the *Camulodunum*. “In tracing this city, how have some writers betrayed their ignorance, when its name discovers it to the blindest observer.”^f After this strong assertion, it is natural to expect some proof, but he does not produce the smallest whatever; for, if properly spelt, there is no *mal* in the original name of the city: that the name was afterwards corrupted by Claudius is very probable.^g The affinity of names has certainly often led antiquaries into mistakes, in fixing the situations of old towns and camps, and Camden himself has been as liable to these mistakes as other antiquaries. It is very necessary to have a local knowledge of the counties in question, since stations cannot be easily determined in the closet, like etymologies; and they, who have no other reliance, are commonly apt to fall into mistakes themselves, or perpetuate those of others.^h

Camulodunum is expressly said to have been the royal residence of King Cunobeline.

“Καμυλοδουνον το τε Κυνοβελλινυ βασιλειον.”ⁱ

All the coins of Cunobeline, which have been found at Colchester, have *Ca-mv* and not *Ca-ma*. Camden himself acknowledges, that it is

^f Camden's *Britannia*, Vol. ii. p. 41.
had reduced this colony, he struck money inscribed,

COL
CAMALODON
AVG.

if so, he has proved what Richard of Cirencester before observed; that, *Colonia* and *Camulodunum* were the same; but Camden's commentators are at a loss to know where he met with this coin, or more properly medal, as he gives no information.

^h *Archaeologia*, Vol. iv. p. 5.

^g Camden, p. 44, says after Claudius
Dio. Cass. 1. 60

spelt with a *v* upon Cunobeline's coins,^k a great number of which have been found at Colchester, both in gold and silver: they generally have on one side *Camv*, and on the other *Cvnob*; one formerly in the possession of Mr. Morant, had on one side Cunobeline's head *CVNOB* *REX*, on the reverse a horse feeding, and below it . . . *mv* . . . which sufficiently indicates *Camulodunum* to have been the royal seat or capital of that prince. These coins being found here in greater quantities than in any other part of England, renders it extremely probable, if not demonstratively certain, that this spot was the ancient *Camulodunum*.^l Dr. Gale very properly observes, "Let those persons who are for fixing this Colony at Malden, by some little resemblance in the sound, shew the least mark or footstep of the Roman elegance in that place."

At Colchester the immense number of Roman bricks to be seen, evidently shews, that great numbers of Roman edifices were formerly standing there; the churches, town walls, and the castle, are half built with Roman materials. Elegant Roman pavements have been found in many parts of the town; one on the north side of High Street, figured in Morant's History of Essex, vol. i. p. 184; another in St. Martin's Lane, figured in the *Vetusta Monumenta*, vol. iii. plate 39; a third in a garden upon East Hill; all of which I have seen:^m but at Malden, where I was quartered a whole winter, I never saw or heard of any Roman remains, except two coins, one of Nero, and one of Vespasian. Silver coins from the same dies have been found at Colchester.

The discovery of Roman coins in any place is a proof of a very subordinate kind, they are found in many towns or places not mentioned in the Itineraries; at Ridgwell, and Sturmere, neither of which places are mentioned in the Itineraries, a series of coins have been found from Nero to Honorius, at this time in my possession.

The distance of Malden from Mona, which Camden lays considerable stress upon, is as applicable to Colchester as Malden, being under the same degree of latitude. Tacitus mentions, that salubrity

^k Camden, Vol. ii. p. 44.

^l Morant's History of Essex, p. 13.

^m In the History of Essex, mention is made of several others, p. 183.

and good air were always regarded by the Romans, which perfectly agree with Colchester; but by no means with Malden, which is seated in one of the most unhealthy corners of the county.

The personal observations of the Rev. Mr. Leman, (whose superior knowledge of the Roman roads and stations in this country cannot be disputed); are sufficiently forcible, I think, to convince the most incredulous, that Colchester, and not Malden, was the *Camulodunum*—he says,^a “My reasons for thinking that *Camulodunum* ought not to be fixed at Maldon, are, first, that Malden being only thirty-eight miles from London, does not answer to the distances given in the fifth and ninth Iters of Antonine, which are in *both cases* fifty-two miles; secondly, that in case the distances did agree, there are no remains to justify fixing such a station as *Camulodunum* at Maldon, no walls, no Roman bricks, or pottery, no coins (excepting one of Nero and another of Vespasian) or traces of any Roman road (at least that I could discover,) leading immediately to it: whereas Colchester answers exactly to the precise distance assigned it in all the Iters from London. The remains of the great Roman road; with the intermediate stations on it, still exist. Coins without number, tessellated pavements, bricks, and pieces of pottery, are found scattered over the whole surface of the town to this hour; and the walls (the most perfect in regard to their form and to their masonry) still surround a part of the present town of Colchester. Now since the third Iter of Richard, *Camulodunum* and *Colonia*, are proved to be the same identical place; and *Colonia* was before allowed both by Camden and Horsley to be Colchester. What doubt can there remain on any one’s mind at present about the precise situation of this first colony of the Romans in Great Britain?”

As to the estuary mentioned by Camden, every person that has been at West-Mersey, in Mersey Island, must consider the arm of the sea, which comes up to that village, an estuary near the ocean; but cannot consider the river that runs up to Malden as such. At West Mersey, many Roman pavements, and a variety of other Roman antiquities have been discovered. The annexed drawing of a part of one

^a Gentleman’s Magazine for August, 1795, p. 630.

of the pavements, found in the year 1767, five feet below the surface in the church,^a I have the honour to present for the inspection of the Society of Antiquaries: by the scale it appears to have been twelve feet by eleven.

The remains of another pavement is now to be seen in the church-yard, which is nearly covered by Roman pavements: an inhabitant, who resides near the spot, assured me, (in August last) that a grave is seldom dug without discovering some part of a pavement; that several of the coffins are placed upon perfect pavements, which have not been disturbed; likewise that a variety of Roman antiquities have been found in different parts of the island; which make it not only very

^a The following notices respecting this discovery are contained in a manuscript of Cromwell Mortimer, M.D. F.A.S. Secretary of the Royal Society, accompanying drawings of the pavement, now in my possession. S. L.

“Part of a Patera was found on St. Peter’s sand, at the mouth of the river Blackwater, which runs by Maldon. I found here, at low water, several ragged pieces of free-stone, of which there is none naturally on this shore, and a great many pieces of Roman brick: upon the sea wall stands an old Roman building, now a barn, but commonly called St. Peter’s Chapel. This seems to have been the place, where stood the *Othona* of the Romans, or *Ithanchester* of the Saxons, (vide Gibson’s Camden, p. 411, Lond. 1722, in folio). The fishermen told me they often drudge up pieces of broken earthen ware, and sometimes, though rarely, copper or brass money.

“On the opposite side of the river is Mersey Island, a fine high spot of ground, and in the hall-yard adjoining to the church yard of West Mersey parish, is a fine ancient Mosaick pavement; in the hall yard it is but a foot under ground; I traced it to the church-yard pales, and had a hole dug in the church-yard, about four feet deep, at about ten feet distance from the stile, and there found a continuation of the same pavement, the course of the tessellæ being parallel to those in the hall-yard, and on the same level: they lay twenty degrees to the eastward of the north, (without allowing for the variation). The minister and sexton told me, that the whole church-yard was paved at the same depth, and that most of the coffins stand on these pavements, which are east: and south-east of the church large tiles fourteen inches square; in the chancel red tessellæ one and a half square, and west of the church small tiles two or three inches square; and that once two brass coins were found here, but I could not learn whose they were, they being lost again: that the tessellæ in the chancel seem to form the rays of some large stars.

“The Mosaick work in the hall-yard forms only squares, wreaths, and a border of ivy leaves; the colours are white, black, blue, red, and yellow, disposed in shades; being black outermost, then blue, and terminating in white; and in other parts the red is outermost, then yellow, and ending in white.”

probable, but scarcely to be doubted, that the Romans first landed here, and afterwards preferred the situation of Colchester for their colony.

I hope the preceding observations, (which from my own personal inspection I have found very accurate), will be the means of preventing any future controversies, or difference in opinion upon the subject: and that all will agree with Bishop Stillingfleet, Dr. Stukely, Dr. Mason, Mr. Morant, Mr. Gough, and the Rev. Mr. Lemon, that Colchester, and not Malden, was the *Colonia Camulodunum* of Richard of Cirencester.

I remain,

Dear Sir,

Your obedient and humble Servant,

THOMAS WALFORD

To Samuel Lysons, Esq. Director.