

XVII. *A Letter from the Rev. Mr. Watfon, Minister of Ripponden, Yorkshire, to Lord Willoughby of Parham, ascertaining the true Situation of Coccium.*

Read Nov. 19, 1761.

MY LORD,

HAVING (as I think) discovered the true situation of Coccium, a Roman station, concerning which writers have been considerably divided; I take the liberty to trouble your Lordship with this letter, which I request may be read before the Society of Antiquaries, that, from the remarks of that learned body, I may be better enabled to pursue my enquiries on this subject.

THIS station then is only mentioned in Antonine, and Richard the Monk; the former of whom, according to the edition of Surita, makes it to be xvii Italian miles from Mancunium, allowed on all hands to be Manchester. But the editions of Aldus Manutius, Simler, and the copy which is printed in Harrison's description of England, have xviii mille passus, with which agrees the Monk, at page 38 of his Geographical Commentary, printed in 1757, by Charles Julius Bertram, professor of the English tongue in the marine academy of Copenhagen. As this, however, is the only difference to be met with, the distance of Coccium from one known station is sufficiently determined; and as this distance is so small, being only a day's march, we may venture to conclude, that it was the next station from Manchester, in some direction or other. Now, from Antonine we learn, that it lay between Mancunium and Bremetonace, which last place has been indisputably proved by the late Mr. Rauthmell, to be Overburrow, in the North of Lancashire. Let us enquire then where Antiquaries have endeavoured to fix it.

IN the copy of Antonine printed at Amsterdam in 1735, at the word Coccio, is the following note by Wesselingius, " Nec

VOL. I.

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“ ullum de hac diffidium: Ribchester enim nostro tempore dici, “ et plures Romanae superstitionis indidem effodi reliquias passim “ agnoscitur.” Of this opinion was Burton, in his Commentary on Antonine, page 242. His reason for placing Coccium at Ribchester, seems chiefly to arise from the many tokens of Antiquity mentioned by Camden to have been found there; and he fancies that the Coccium of Antonine may be the same as the *Πυροδῆνον* of Ptolemy, and that it might have antiently changed its appellation.

GALE, in his Commentary, page 119, has also chosen Ribchester for this station, making it xxii mille passus from Bretonacis, though the Iter says only xx. His reason for pitching on this particular place is, because *Côch*, and *Gôch*, signify Red in the British tongue; the remains of which words he thought might still be traced in the name of the river there, called Ribble; but why it should have this appellation he could not say, unless from the colour of its sands, or from the Roach and Salmon which it abounds with.

DR. Legh, in his Natural History of Lancashire, Book III. has a different reason for thinking Ribchester to be the antient Coccium; for he imagines it to have its name from Cocceius Nerva, producing an inscription found there to confirm his opinion; the six last letters of which being, I. T. C. C. N. N. he reads, “ Imperatori Triumphanti Caesari Cocceio Nervae;” but it is far from clear, that the Dr. has hit upon the right reading; for it is not likely that N. N. should stand for Nervae.” In fact (as Mr. Horsley has observed, page 302,) the letters seem to be in confusion; and as it is doubtful that we have no true copy of this inscription, which is now lost, no argument can fairly be drawn from it to prove what was the Roman name of the town of Ribchester.

CAMDEN, in the edition of his Britannia, printed in 1586, has given us an inscription, found at or near this place, ending in the
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same manner as this; but sees no reason to conclude from thence, that this was Coccium. His words are, pag. 431, “ Ex his
“ nihil plane luminis ad priscum hujus loci nomen eruendum,
“ de quo ambigitur, nisi subinde nomen mutârit, quod nonnun-
“ quam usu venit;” adding that Ptolemy has placed Rigodunum here, and Antonine Bremetonacum.

MR. Horsley, at pag. 302 of his *Britannia Romana*, has told us, that Ribchester, by the distance and course of the stations, seems to be Coccium in the Itinerary; yet it is remarkable, that at pag. 455 of the same Book, he says, the distance between Ribchester and Manchester is certainly too great for the xvii miles in the Itinerary between Coccium and Mancunium; adding, that it is twenty computed miles from Ribchester to Manchester; these, he thinks, answer to xxvii in the Itinerary; if therefore we add a single x to the present numerals, he supposes that it will set us right as to the distance. Dissatisfied, however, with his own method of settling this difficulty, when he considered the good agreement in this Iter, between the sum total and the particulars, he rather chose to rank this among the original errors; thus leaving the argument in a great measure where he found it.

THESE are the most considerable writers who have endeavoured to prove, that Ribchester was the Coccium of the Romans; and these the arguments that have inclined them to be of this opinion. From the whole it may be observed, that there is nothing advanced by any of them which proves the point; on the contrary, they have erred in not taking notice of the only rule which was given them to find it by; namely, that it was xvii, or at the most xviii mille passus from Mancunium, and have carried it to near double the distance from this last mentioned place that they ought to have done; for the twenty computed miles, which Mr. Horsley says there are between Manchester and Ribchester, according to the general run of miles in the county of Lancaster, will measure, not, as he supposes, xxvii

Italian, but xxx English miles, which, according to Mr. Horsley's own method of fixing the Ratio between the Roman and English road miles, will be more than xxxii Italian ones, which is a difference that can by no means be allowed; and what makes it probable, as there is room for a station between Manchester and Ribchester, that the true situation of Coccium has been overlooked, and fixed at this latter place, because no visible remains of a station have hitherto been publicly known, which answered better to the distance.

BUT, greatly as the above may seem to differ from the Itineraries, Mr. Baxter has ventured to differ still more, in his Glossary, at the word COCCIUM, for he has fixed this station at Adel Mill in Yorkshire; because, near Adel, which was a Roman station, there is a place called Cookridge, which he supposed was so called, as being “*Dorsum Coccianum*.” But a definition of this sort, however ingenious, can weigh nothing, when it is considered, that from Manchester to Adel is more than xl measured miles. I therefore pass by this opinion, and proceed to consider the notion, that Cockly Chapel, near Bury in Lancashire, was the antient Coccium. This seems to have been first asserted by Camden, who was led thereto, I suppose, from the similarity of the name, and the pointing of a Roman road that way from Manchester, and especially, as this was the only antient military way then known between Manchester and Ribchester. However, to establish this notion he was forced to represent Antonine as a most corrupt author, and the numerals in this very place to be faulty, lest the variation in the distance should be objected to him; for this Chapel is only about nine measured miles from Manchester. His words are these, at page 429 of the edition already mentioned: “*Mancunio in Antonini Itinerario succedit*
“*Coccium, quod ad Cockly facellum fuisse juxta Bury, credam*
“*ego, donec dies certiora dederit. Unàque credam necesse est*
“*apud Antoninum eo loco numerum esse corruptum, idque cum*
“*bona,*

“ bona, ut spero, lectoris venia, cum auctor ille sit corruptissimus,
“ si illo tempore non impeditiores erant viarum anfractus, dum
“ vadosa in fluminibus loca perquirerent.” Our valuable Antiquary has made here too hasty a conclusion; for the Romans did not, in the instance before us, go about for the sake of a convenient ford, neither did Antonine put down a wrong distance; for in fact (as I hope it will appear by and by) Coccium did not lie upon this road at all. That it was not at Cockly Chapel, may be presumed, because there are no remains there, nor a tradition that any such were ever there: And therefore, they had some little more probability on their side, who supposed this station to have been at Bury; for the name of this denotes it to have been Roman, and the marks of a station are still visible here, measuring about two hundred yards one way, and how far the other is uncertain; for at the end of ninety yards it is taken up by buildings. This might possibly be looked upon as Coccium, but that its distance from Manchester is so small, that it cannot by any means be reconciled with the Itineraries. What the name of this station was, as well as many others, we can hardly expect to know, for the Itineraries have given us but part; as Richard the Monk has confessed in these words, at the end of what he calls his Diaphragmata, pag. 40. “ Plurima insuper
“ habebant Romani in Britannia castella, suis quaeque muris, tur-
“ ribus, portis et repagulis munita.” And, since this is the case, their mistakes are evident, who have supposed there were no stations but what are contained in the Itineraries, and have for this reason been for altering the numerals on every occasion, to make the distances between the known stations agree. It cannot indeed be denied, but that these numerals are sometimes faulty, having been too often transcribed to be found perfect; however, they ought not to be corrected without some good reason; for as most stations are to be found by their distance from two others, the arbitrary fixing of one of these, without having regard to the
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number of miles laid down, may serve to throw a whole *Iter* into confusion. It will seldom, I think, be right to make any material addition to the figures; for where the distance between two known stations is considerably larger than the numbers in the *Itineraries*, if proper search be made, a middle station will generally be found, so situated as to clear up the difficulty. This proved to be the case between Manchester and Ribchester; for it was plain, that xx computed miles (as Mr. Horsley has called them, though in reality they are more) could never answer to the xvii or xviii of Antonine. Having therefore taken some pains to search for a road that might have led from one of these towns to the other, in a different direction from that already known, I found at last, that one took its beginning at an antient ford over the river Irwell, below the station at Manchester, near Ordsall, a seat formerly belonging to the Radcliffes; and, pointing over several inclosures, of which I know not at present the names, it crosses the highway between Manchester and Warrington, near the village of Eccles, at a place called Broom-house Lane, and runs through the estate called Hope, belonging to Daniel Bailey, Esq; where it is made of gravel, and is about twelve yards broad, and in some places lies so near the present surface of the ground, that the plough turns it up; and in one field, a little beyond this estate, it was cut through in making a marle pit. A little farther still, in a place called Lever Heath Lane, it is very visible, rising about a foot above the level of the lane, which it crosses; and is carried on through some farms called Westwoods, and Drywood, then pointing upon Wardley, and running through that estate, and some others in a direct line, till it comes to Stany-street (so called in all probability, because it might have been here a set way), it goes along Walkeden Moor, and is found again by its name at the farther end of the Moor, at a place called Street Yate, from whence it points upon the town of Blackrod. It was near the trace of this way, about half a mile nearer the town of
Manchester

Manchester than Blackrod, that I had the good fortune to discover the remains of a Roman station, which bid the fairest, of any yet known, to be the so much sought for Coccium. Part of the ground is called Castle Croft, and the highway leading from Manchester to Preston goes through the middle of it. It is so much demolished that it is not easy to fix the limits of it; however, it seems to have occupied a space of about two hundred and fifteen yards one way, and about two hundred another. In that part of it called Castle Croft, the ground is still very irregular, and part of the ditch is visible, and it seems as if it had been strongly fortified; the rest is so levelled by cultivation, that it can scarcely be discovered where the ramparts were, except in a very few places. It has a good command of the country, especially towards the north and east; and I think, if a beacon had been erected on the hills towards the east, it might have been seen both from this station and that near Manchester. The distance from Manchester to this station is xviii statute miles; and as the Roman way is more than a mile shorter than the present travelled road, the xviii mille passus in Richard the Monk, and several editions of Antonine, agree with the situation of this place to the greatest exactness. As for inscriptions, or coins, it is true, I could not learn, with any degree of truth, that any such had been found here, but that may be said of several known stations in England; the reason of which may be, that the knowledge of Antiquities has till lately been little attended to; and what things of this sort fell into the hands of our forefathers, they took not sufficient care to preserve. Many curious remains of former ages lie also concealed in antient camps, which may yet be discovered, when, for some reason or other, men have occasion to dig lower than the plough has gone. However, the station I am describing is not absolutely devoid of evidences of its antiquity; for pieces of antient bricks and pots, if not urns, are said to have been found at or near it. The people who live upon the spot told me, that
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there had been dug up, in the Castle Croft, two strong iron-bars, which they supposed belonged to the Castle which once stood there; and in making the present highway which runs through the station, were found a great quantity of horse-shoes, of a large size, and uncommon workmanship; but none of these are preserved.

IT is remarkable, that Richard the Monk has told us, that Coccium had the Jus Latium; an honour conferred only on ten cities in the whole island. For this reason, perhaps, some might expect to find there more, and greater remains; but such conclusion is wrong, for the situation of Cambodunum (for instance), which had the same privilege, was never ascertained by any thing of this sort. If Almondbury (as most Antiquaries after Bede have supposed) was the place, it is not known that ever a coin, an altar, an inscription, or any Roman remain, was ever found there; nor have the other situations, where this may with equal probability be fixed, any thing of this sort to plead for them.

FROM the whole I conclude, that the Romans had two ways from Manchester to Ribchester, which last was probably the *Πρυοδῆνον* of Ptolemy, placed by him in the map, published by Mercator, where Ribchester stands, but by Mr. Horsley removed to Warrington, to make way for Coccium. One of these roads went near Bury; the other was by Blackrod, as already described; and as on the former (which has been carefully examined) there are no stations which at all correspond with the Itineraries; and Castle Croft answering thereto with the greatest exactness; I cannot but think it extremely probable that this was Coccium.

FUTURE enquiries, I hope, will enable me to write on this subject with greater precision; in the mean time, these imperfect hints, about a station which has been quite unknown to Antiquaries, are with great deference submitted to your Lordship's judgement, and that of the Society.