



Searching out Roman Inscribed and Sculptured Stones on the Antonine Wall in 1723

By LAWRENCE KEPPIE

ABSTRACT

Correspondence addressed to the antiquary Sir John Clerk, 2nd baronet of Penicuik, Midlothian, allows us to document the initial recording in 1723 of Roman inscriptions and relief sculpture observed at several forts along the line of the Antonine Wall between the Forth and Clyde, and the arrangements put in place to transport them to his home at Penicuik House. Particularly valuable is a series of drawings, which are sometimes our only visual record of the stones.

Keywords: Antonine Wall; inscriptions; relief sculpture; antiquaries; Sir John Clerk of Penicuik; Alexander Gordon

INTRODUCTION¹

In the summer of 1723 the antiquary Alexander Gordon of Aberdeen traversed the line of the Antonine Wall on a mission to record its standing remains. The results of this fieldwork were published in his *Itinerarium Septentrionale* ('Journey over Northern Parts') in 1726.² Many Roman inscribed and sculptured stones built into farmhouses or kept at country houses along the route of the Wall were recorded for the first time. Gordon was able to reserve several of them for his new-found patron, Sir John Clerk of Penicuik.³

Preserved at the National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, among the Clerk of Penicuik Muniments on deposit there, is a card wallet containing several folded sheets of paper, on four

¹ The following abbreviations are used:

CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (1863–)

NLS National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh

NRS National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh

RIB I R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain, I: Inscriptions on Stone* (1965; new edn with Addenda and Corrigenda by R.S.O. Tomlin, 1995)

RIB III R.S.O. Tomlin, R.P. Wright and M.W.C. Hassall, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain, III: Inscriptions on Stone found or notified between 1 January 1955 and 31 December 2006* (2009)

² Gordon 1726. On his life and career, see Brown 2004. Gordon travelled along the Wall again in the summer of 1725 (Keppie 2012a, 75).

³ On Sir John Clerk, see Brown 1977; Brown 1980; Mitchison 2004; Brown 2012; Keppie 2012a, 69.

of which are drawings of eleven inscribed and sculptured stones.⁴ Beside each drawing is a note in Sir John Clerk's hand, in the same ink, indicating the whereabouts of the stones. The notes were written between August and November 1723 (see below). It is clear that Clerk intended them to facilitate the removal of the stones to his home at Penicuik House, Midlothian. Some of the stones are well known. Others are alluded to by Gordon in his *Itinerarium* but not illustrated, so that the drawings being published here are our only visual record of them. All but two (here Nos 2 and 3) are now lost.

In August 1723, soon after he had become acquainted with Sir John Clerk, Gordon appears to have visited many of the forts on the Wall (see below). In September, after a meeting with Sir John at Penicuik, he again travelled along it, this time in the company of James Glen, of a prominent family in Linlithgow, who was shortly to become Provost of this West Lothian town.⁵ In the meantime Sir John Clerk asked farmer Richard Burn, who lived close to the line of the Wall near Polmont, Stirlingshire, to secure the stones seen by Gordon.

Annotations on these sheets of paper identify individuals with whom Burn would have to deal. Two letters from him to Clerk, dated 28 September and 18 November 1723, detail his efforts, not always successful, to obtain them.⁶ The stones mentioned on the sheets derived from Roman forts on the Antonine Wall (FIG. 1) at Castlecary, Westerwood, Croy Hill, Bar Hill, Auchendavy, Balmuildy and Duntocher, in many cases incorporated into farm buildings constructed within their ramparts.

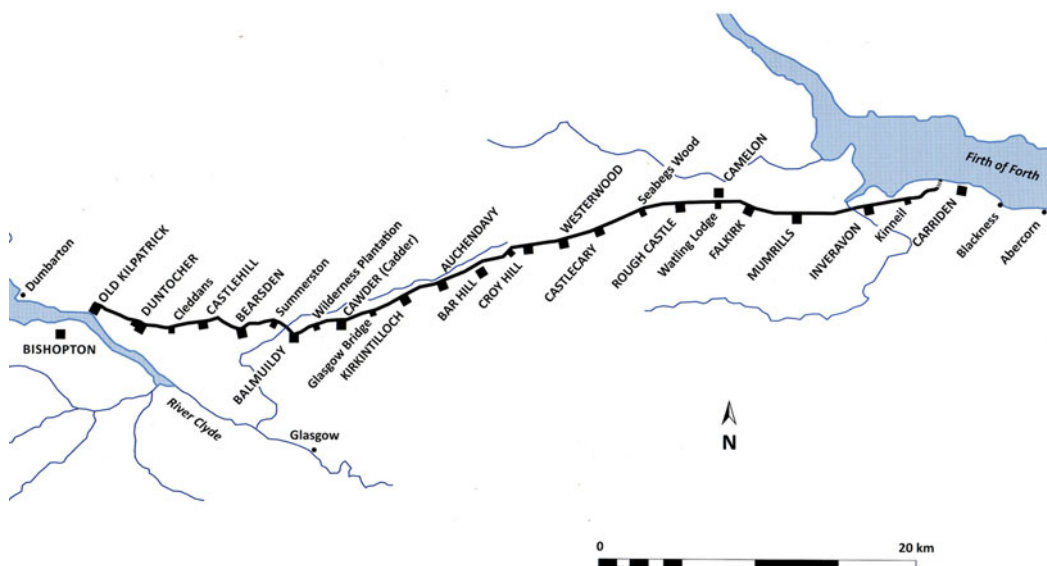


FIG. 1. The Antonine Wall. (From an original drawing by Lawrence Keppie; © Society of Antiquaries of Scotland)

⁴ NRS GD18/5068/2–5. One stone is drawn twice (Nos 1 and 7 below). Other sheets in the same wallet are decorated with cartoons, silhouettes, doodles and architectural drawings.

⁵ NRS GD18/5023/3/1. For Glen, see Robinson 1996, 9; Godbold 2004; Keppie 2012a, 72.

⁶ NRS GD18/5024/1, 5024/3.

CATALOGUE

First sheet (NRS GD18/5068/4)

1. **Duntocher.** A rectangular building stone with the inscription ΩERO, above which is what appears to be a plain moulding or bevelled edge (FIG. 2).⁷ 'At the mill of Duntocher a mile westward from Kilpatrick. The millar's name is Thomas Laing.' By 'Kilpatrick' Clerk means New Kilpatrick, now Bearsden, north of Glasgow.

As Gordon reported to Clerk in a letter of 19 September 1723, 'When Mr Burn or any goes in my name, you will have them for little more than a trifle, viz the Nero at Duntocher, which the miller would not take a farthing for, but absolutely promised to give it when asked for in my name; those at Westerwood you may also have' (for the latter, see below No. 8).⁸ The lettering on the stone was interpreted by antiquaries in different ways. Gordon evidently read NERO. However, the stone goes unmentioned in the *Itinerarium Septentrionale*, and there is no illustration of it.

During the preparation of his *Britannia Romana*, published in 1732, the Revd John Horsley was at Duntocher, and drew the letters OERO or OFRO; his drawing could indicate that the bottom of each letter was cut away. In his text Horsley tentatively suggested the word *Vero*.⁹ No satisfactory interpretation has since been offered, unless Ω conceals a centurial sign.¹⁰

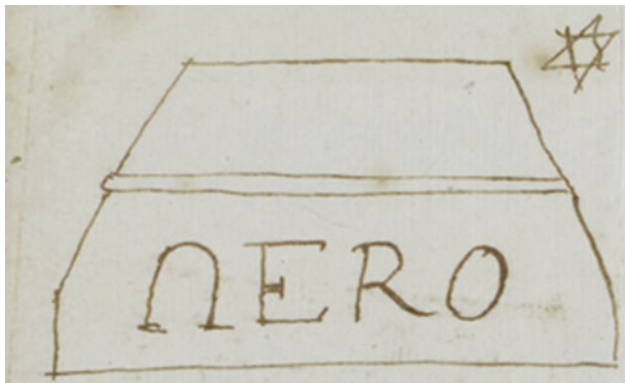


FIG. 2. Inscribed building stone seen at Duntocher (NRS GD18/5068/4). (Reproduced by permission of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, Bt)

2. **Croy Hill.** A rectangular building stone with the inscription LEG V set within a rectangular frame (FIG. 3).¹¹ 'At Mr Maxwells a change keeper in Kilsyth.'¹² Removed to Penicuik in 1723, it is now in National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh.

⁷ *RIB* I, 2202; see Keppie 2004, 210 with fig. 21.

⁸ NRS GD18/5023/3/1.

⁹ Horsley 1732, 195, pl. (*Scotland*) iia. On Horsley's schedule of visits, see now Keppie 2013.

¹⁰ For this possibility, see Hübner 1877, 138, no. 115; *RIB* I, 2202; cf. Keppie 2004, 211.

¹¹ *RIB* I, 2162.

¹² A 'change keeper' was an inn or alehouse keeper. Four of the drawings published here were marked by Sir John with a star (Nos 1–3, 12). A common factor is that these were stones left for collection with change keepers, or, in the case of the 'Nero', expected there.

As drawn by both Gordon and Horsley, the inscription was contained within an ansate panel. Gordon read the first line as LEG V, observing that ‘two angular borderings appear on each side of the stone, so close and plain, that it leaves no room to doubt of its being read *Legio Quinta*; nor is there any space whatsoever, for another letter to have been put in . . . I found it myself, built up in a cottage, part of it being covered over with clay’.¹³ Horsley, though also reading LEG V, considered that it must have been a record of building work by *leg[io] V[ictrix]*, by which legion *VI Victrix Pia Fidelis* was meant.¹⁴ R.G. Collingwood, one of the editors of *RIB I*, detected an additional numeral concealed in the right-hand side-frame, so allowing the numeral VI to be read.¹⁵

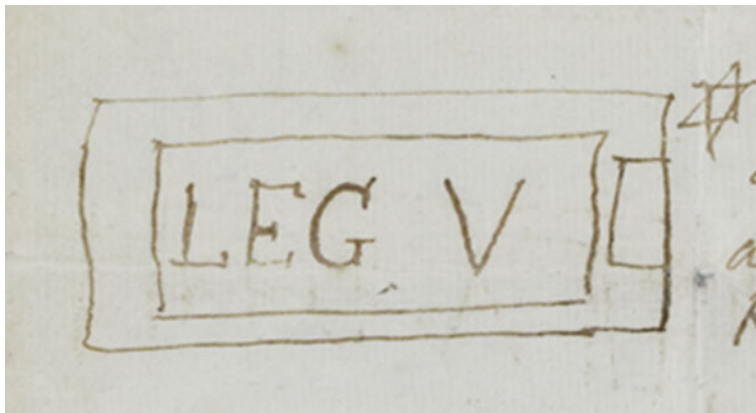


FIG. 3. Inscribed building stone seen at Croy Hill (NRS GD18/5068/4). (Reproduced by permission of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, Bt)

3. **Croy Hill.** A rectangular building stone with the inscription LEG V / VIC P F (FIG. 4).¹⁶ ‘This stone is likeways at Mr Maxwells a change keeper in Kilsyth.’ Removed to Penicuik in 1723, it is now in National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh. Gordon, Horsley and all subsequent commentators read LEG VI in the first line.¹⁷ It is a record of building work, like No. 2 above, by legion *VI Victrix Pia Fidelis*.

In his letter of 28 September to Clerk, Richard Burn reported that he ‘went to Kilsyth and found ther the two Stons left at Maxwels [i.e. Nos 2 and 3], but the other at Duntocher mill [No. 1] was not come that Length. I left a shill[ing] to be given for the carry of the ston that comes from Duntocher to bring it to my howse and I have two here [Nos 2 and 3] which shall be sent when the rest comes here or sooner if yow pleas’.¹⁸

¹³ Gordon 1726, 56 with pl. 10.4. The partial covering with clay could account for the poor representation of the ansate panel on the drawing under discussion.

¹⁴ Horsley 1732, 200, pl. (Scotland) xvii; see also Hübner 1873, 198 on *CIL VII*, 1106; Macdonald 1934, 402, no. 21, pl. lxxii.2.

¹⁵ *RIB I*, 2162 *ad loc.*

¹⁶ *RIB I*, 2161.

¹⁷ Gordon 1726, 56 with pl. 10.3; Horsley 1732, 200, pl. (Scotland) xviii; Hübner 1873, 198 on *CIL VII*, 1107; Macdonald 1934, 401, no. 19, pl. lxxii.1.

¹⁸ The ‘Nero’ stone never reached Kilsyth; for its later history, see Knox 1785, 612; Keppie 2004, 210.

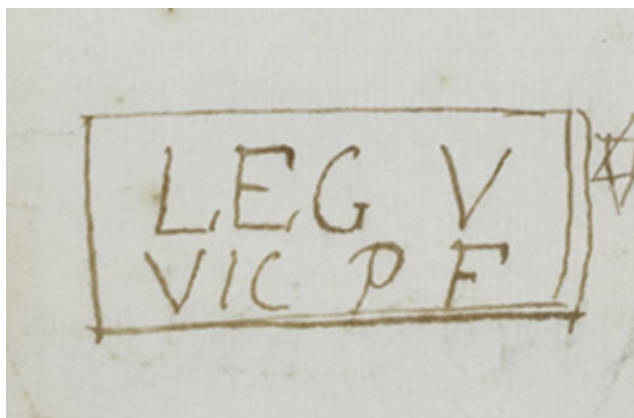


FIG. 4. Inscribed building stone seen at Croy Hill (NRS GD18/5068/4). (Reproduced by permission of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, Bt)

Second sheet (NRS GD 18/5068/2, recto)

4. **Auchendavy.** The upper half of an altar, preserving its capital with a bolster at the left (FIG. 5). On the shaft below is a pedimented frame, within which are two letters, P M. 'These two stones [Nos 4 and 5] at Achindavey.' The altar was damaged at the edges, especially on the right-hand side.¹⁹ It is now lost.

In his published account of Auchendavy, Gordon mentions this stone. 'I saw in the Wall of one of their Houses a small Altar with a Pediment supported by two Pilasters, but defaced and spoiled.'²⁰ He does not illustrate it and implies that the stone bore no inscription. Horsley too observed that 'Roman antiquities have been found here, and some altars may be seen in the walls of the houses of the village [of Auchendavy], but no inscriptions on them'.²¹ Perhaps the altar, if it was in fact inscribed, was dedicated to P (...) M (...),²² or erected by P (...) M (...).²³

¹⁹ Keppie and Arnold 1984, no. 117. Notice the similar frame carved on one face of an uninscribed altar from Bar Hill, as recorded by Gordon (1726, 55, pl. 13.3); see Keppie and Arnold 1984, no. 96. Not in *RIB*.

²⁰ Gordon 1726, 54.

²¹ Horsley 1732, 169.

²² For *Pacifer Mars* (Mars the bringer of peace), see *RIB* I, 584.

²³ For the prefect Publicius Maternus attested at Old Kilpatrick, see *RIB* III, 3509. For a dedicator's names abbreviated to single letters, see *RIB* I, 2159 (Croy Hill) and perhaps *RIB* III, 3502 (Cramond). Alternatively the letters P M might have been a misreading of D(is) M(anibus); cf. *RIB* I, 2183 found near but not at Auchendavy in 1726.

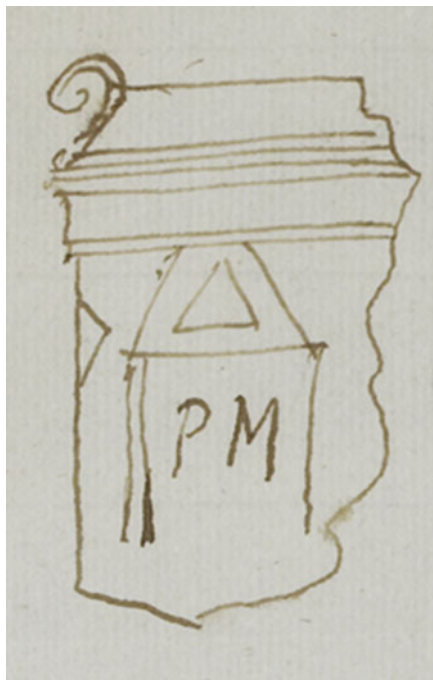


FIG. 5. Altar seen at Auchendavy (NRS GD18/5068/2 recto). (*Reproduced by permission of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, Bt*)

5. **Auchendavy.** Part of a sculptured panel, with a curving recess at the top, bordered on two sides by plain mouldings with a zig-zag dot pattern on the left (FIG. 6). It is now lost. Gordon may refer to it in his published account of Auchendavy: ‘In another Place was a very curious Stone, about four Feet long and two broad, of a bluish Colour, with several remarkable Wavings cut upon it.’²⁴ It could have been part of a decorative screen, or a window-arch.²⁵

²⁴ Gordon 1726, 54.

²⁵ For the latter, see Coulston and Phillips 1988, nos 413–32.



FIG. 6. Sculptured panel seen at Auchendavy (NRS GD18/5068/2 recto). (Reproduced by permission of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, Bt)

6. **Balmuildy.** Fragment of a sculptured panel, on which a winged figure of Victory, facing right, holds a small laurel wreath (FIG. 7). The panel is framed by rope mouldings above and to the left. ‘This stone and 3 more inconsiderable are at Bamulie built in a barn 2 miles from the kirk Town of Caldar.’²⁶ It goes unmentioned in the *Itinerarium Septentrionale*, and is now lost.

This is the left-hand side panel of a slab on which the die containing the inscription was flanked by winged Victories, a common motif on the northern frontier in Britain and elsewhere.²⁷ The inscription itself is likely to have commemorated construction of a stone building within the fort or its annexe, or of a gate. The nineteenth-century antiquary John Buchanan, in a footnote added to the posthumous second edition of Robert Stuart’s *Caledonia Romana* (1852), observed that at Balmuildy ‘finely sculptured stones, one in particular with a human figure in high relief and wreaths of flowers, were visible in the walls of the cottages, but are now all lost’.²⁸ Sir John Clerk’s testimony indicates that what is presumably the same panel could be seen at Balmuildy already in 1723. The ‘3 more inconsiderable’ stones are not itemised; whether they belonged to the same slab is unknown.

²⁶ Cadder, near Bishopbriggs, Glasgow, which was the site of an as yet unrecognised Roman fort.

²⁷ e.g. *RIB* I, 783, 1093, 1137, 1164; Keppie and Arnold 1984, nos 26–27.

²⁸ Stuart 1852, 320, n. (a); hence Keppie and Arnold 1984, no. 136.



FIG. 7. Sculptured panel seen at Balmuildy (NRS GD18/5068/2 recto). (*Reproduced by permission of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, Bt*)

7. **Duntocher.** A rectangular building stone bearing the letters Ω ERO (FIG. 8).²⁹ 'This stone is at the mill of Duntocher where there is a Roman Castellum.' This is the same stone as No. 1 above, with a different caption.

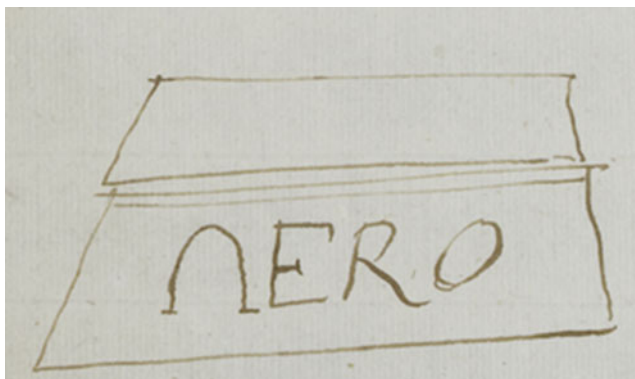


FIG. 8. Inscribed building stone seen at Duntocher (NRS GD18/5068/2 recto). (*Reproduced by permission of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, Bt*)

²⁹ *RIB* I, 2202.

Second sheet (NRS GD18/5068/2, verso)

8. **Westerwood.** A rectangular building stone with the inscription RIVS IMP, broken at the right (FIG. 9). ‘This stone is within the barn of Rob Leeshman Tennant in Westerwood 2 ft long and 6 inches broad.’ It is now lost.³⁰

Gordon illustrates the stone in the *Itinerarium*,³¹ but it is absent from his text, unless included among ‘other Inscriptions [which] have been dug up [at Westerwood], some of which are broke, and built up within their Houses’.³² But for Clerk’s annotation to the drawing we would not know its provenance or its dimensions, and could easily have supposed it much smaller. In fact this was part of a slab of substantial size, likely to record building work at the fort. The letters RIVS could preserve part of a Roman name such as Valerius or Marius, a military rank such as *frumentarius* or *tabularius*, or the name of an emperor [...] *rius imp (erator)*, in the nominative case.³³ In his letter to Clerk of 19 September Burn had promised that ‘those at Westerwood you may also have’ (see above No. 1). He can be presumed to mean this stone together with another, which is conspicuous by its absence from this clutch of drawings, on which was carved in relief ‘a Priapus or penis’ (FIG. 15).³⁴ In his letter of 18 November 1723, Burn reported to Clerk, in relation to this second stone, that he had been ‘at Robt Lishmans and saw that stone in his byre gabell [byre gable], and wold have got it, but could not get a masone to take it out & put in another in its place’.³⁵ Subsequently he hired a local man who removed it (see below).

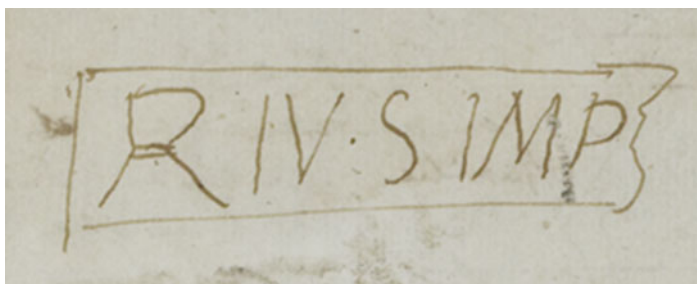


FIG. 9. Inscribed stone seen at Westerwood (NRS GD18/5068/2 verso). (Reproduced by permission of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, Bt)

9. **Netherwood.** A rectangular building stone with the inscription —E (FIG. 10). ‘This stone is in the barn of William Greenlees in Netherwood.’ It is not mentioned by Gordon in his brief account of Netherwood.³⁶ It is now lost.

The present-day Netherwood farm lies some 500 m north of the Antonine Wall, midway between the forts at Castlecary and Westerwood. Antiquarian references could suggest,

³⁰ Not in *RIB*.

³¹ Gordon 1726, pl. 12.

³² Gordon 1726, 56.

³³ Only Tiberius and Honorius are suitable emperors, but as they belong in historical epochs long before and long after Scotland was occupied by the Romans, they can be discounted. Notice Papirius Aelianus, governor of Britain in A.D. 146, Virius Lupus governor in A.D. 197, and Camurius Numisius Junior, legate of a legion under Antoninus Pius (Birley 2005, 143, 183, 256).

³⁴ Gordon 1726, 56, pl. xv.3 (*RIB* I, 2157).

³⁵ NRS GD18/5024/3.

³⁶ Gordon 1726, 57.

however, that a predecessor farm building lay further south, close to or astride the Wall itself.³⁷ Perhaps tooling on one face of this stone was mistaken for an inscription.³⁸ After his visit to Robert Leeshman (or Lishman) at nearby Westerwood (see above No. 8), Richard Burn noted ‘that in his neighbours [presumably No. 9] is not of much valew being no leters on it but m[igh]t also be got if you think proper’.³⁹

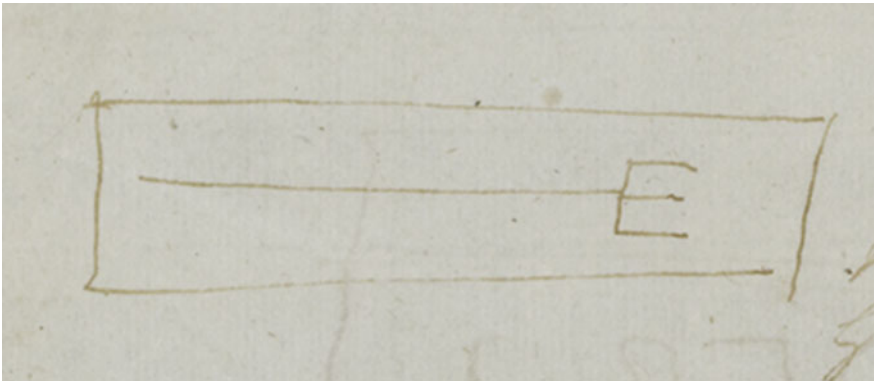


FIG. 10. Building stone seen at Netherwood (NRS GD18/5068/2 verso). (Reproduced by permission of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, Bt)

10. **Provenance unknown.** A stone bearing the inscription VLC ... / RVNE / A CAT / INP A / ... VM (FIG. 11). ‘In Lithgow at the Clerk’s father.’ This was an upright stone, several centimetres thick, broken away at the bottom and at the right-hand side. It is now lost.

‘The clerk’ in Sir John’s annotation is probably the town clerk of Linlithgow, West Lothian, which lies 5 km south of the eastern terminus of the Antonine Wall. The post of clerk at this Royal Burgh was held in succession by members of one local family, the Bells of Avontoun. Alexander Bell was ‘sheriff and town clerk’ in 1723, jointly with his father William Bell.⁴⁰ The stone is not otherwise reported. We know that Alexander Gordon was twice at Linlithgow in September 1723 (see below);⁴¹ he might have seen and transcribed the inscription then. Though we could postulate a dedication to the god Vulcan, attested several times in Britain,⁴² a Roman date cannot be assumed. An early Christian date is worth considering, unless this is a gravestone of a much later period.

³⁷ Gordon 1726, loc. cit.; Horsley 1732, 170.

³⁸ For examples of such tooling, see Glasgow Archaeological Society 1899, 61 with fig.

³⁹ NRS GD18/5024/3.

⁴⁰ Information from Laurie Alexander, Linlithgow, and Sibyl Cavanagh, West Lothian Heritage and Information Centre, Linlithgow.

⁴¹ NRS GD 18/5023/3/1.

⁴² Reading [V]ulc[ano] in line 1; see *RIB* I, 215, 220, 846, 899, 1700. The form *Volcano* is more common.

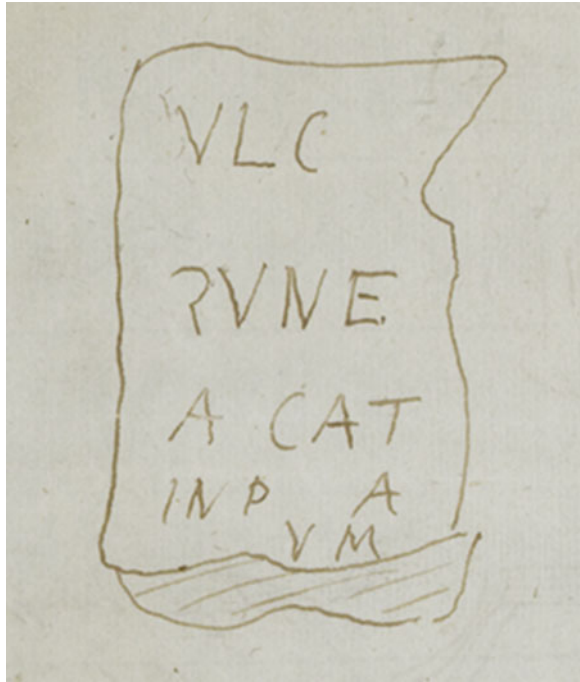


FIG. 11. Inscribed stone seen at Linlithgow (NRS GD18/5068/2 verso). (Reproduced by permission of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, Bt)

Third sheet (NRS GD18/5068/5)

11. **Bar Hill.** A cylindrical pillar with an inscription set within plain mouldings, which reads IMP • CAES / T AE • IADR / ANTONINO / AVG • PI • PP / VEXILATI • VS (FIG. 12).⁴³ It was broken away at the bottom. The final two letters in the last line overlap the right-hand border. 'This is in the garden of Kilsyth & cannot be disposed of without the factor's consent. Bayly Stark is the factor.' The pillar was removed to Sir John Clerk's house at Penicuik in 1723 (see below), but is now lost.

This stone is first mentioned by John Strachey, the Somerset antiquary and geologist, in his journal of a visit to Scotland in 1721;⁴⁴ his friend William Stukeley subsequently obtained a drawing of it from him.⁴⁵ Stukeley described it, on Strachey's authority, as 'a pillar brought from old Place. In Kilsyth Garden house, probably a milliary [this word scored through] stone for upon some road'. Alexander Gordon states that it was found at Bar Hill fort.⁴⁶ The dedication was to the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, erected by *vexillationes* (military detachments). Gordon and Horsley believed it

⁴³ *RIB* I, 2312.

⁴⁴ Somerset Heritage Centre DD/SH/5/382, p. 41.

⁴⁵ Opposite p. 10 in Stukeley's own copy of his *Account of a Roman Temple* (Stukeley 1720), held at the Sackler Library, Oxford. Strachey read the inscription as IMP CAES / T AE ADRI / ANT • NIN • / AVG PI • P P / VEXILATIONIS.

⁴⁶ Gordon 1726, 55.

to be a pillar dedicated to the emperor Antoninus.⁴⁷ Subsequently it was seen as a milestone, perhaps from the Military Way at Bar Hill.⁴⁸ It is currently interpreted as an inscribed column shaft from that fort's headquarters building.⁴⁹



FIG. 12. Inscribed pillar seen at Kilsyth (NRS GD18/5068/5). (Reproduced by permission of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, Bt)

‘The garden of Kilsyth’, where the stone lay in 1723, belonged to a mansion house in the town owned by the Livingstons, Viscounts Kilsyth, until dispossessed in 1715 after the First Jacobite Rebellion; the house and garden appear on General William Roy’s map of the area in 1755.⁵⁰ ‘Old Place’ was a ruined residence of the Livingstons west of the town, near the modern village of Queenzieburn; the circumstances of the stone’s transfer to Kilsyth elude us. John Strachey was at Kilsyth in 1721 on behalf of the new owners, the York Buildings Company, which had bought up several estates cheaply in the aftermath of the Jacobite Rebellion, including Kilsyth.⁵¹ James Stark, previously chamberlain to the Livingston family,⁵² and a baillie (magistrate) in the town, leased the Kilsyth estate from the Company in 1721, but

⁴⁷ Gordon 1726, 55 with pl. 9.4; Horsley 1732, 200, pl. (*Scotland*) xvi. The last two letters were read by Gordon and Horsley as V S, prompting an expansion to *v(otum) s(olvit)*, but they are now seen as the end of the word *vexillationes* (*CIL* VII, 1109; Macdonald 1934, 406, n. 2).

⁴⁸ *RIB* I, 2312.

⁴⁹ Robertson *et al.* 1975, 34, no. 7; *RIB I Addenda* (1995), p. 799 (on *RIB* I, 2132).

⁵⁰ Dennison *et al.* 2006, 6, fig. 5.

⁵¹ Anton 1893, 169; Murray 1883, 48.

⁵² NRS E640/25/24.

surrendered the lease in 1723, after which he served as its factor until 1728.⁵³ Strachey's journal records a meeting with Stark at Kilsyth;⁵⁴ perhaps they met at the mansion house, where Strachey could have seen and drawn this inscription, the only one mentioned individually in his journal.

In his letter to Sir John Clerk of 28 September, Burn reported that 'I mised balie Stark being at Glasgow and left a lēter for him with yor landledie his stepmother who favours that you shall have the ston per fass awt nefas.⁵⁵ . . . That in the garden of Kilsyth [No. 11] & the one at Awchenvole [FIG. 14]⁵⁶ will make a kart draught; and when they are got safe into a mans Custodie . . . I go west with a kart and bring them away'.⁵⁷ In his second letter, written on 18 November, Burn was able to write that he had secured the stone 'which was in the garden of Kilsyth which I got by flatory drinking and other methods of the factor and gardner. For after the factor had given consent that I should have it, I was forced to purches his, the gardners, goodwill'.⁵⁸ The factor is presumably James Stark whom Burn had not succeeded in meeting on his earlier visit.

Fourth sheet (NRS GD18/5068/3)

12. **Castlecary.** Altar with the inscription IAVNPV / MILITES / VEX IIIO (FIG. 13).⁵⁹ The first line of the inscription occupies the front face of the capital, with the other two lines on the shaft. Above is a circular *focus* for receiving offerings. 'This stone is left at Thomas Bairds a change keeper in Cumbernald.' It is now lost.

This is the upper half of an altar first mentioned by Dr Christopher Irvine in 1682,⁶⁰ and shortly afterwards by Sir Robert Sibbald,⁶¹ as found 'near to' Castlecary and held by the Earl of Wigton at Cumbernald Castle 3 km to the south-west of Castlecary Roman fort. As Irvine's and Sibbald's testimonies make clear, it was an altar dedicated to the Mother Goddesses (the first line read MATRIBVS) by a detachment (*vexillatio*) of soldiers.⁶² By 1723 the altar was broken in two, and one line lost. Alexander Gordon saw only the upper half, which is the subject of this drawing. As he reports, 'at this Place [Castlecary Roman fort] was also dug up another small portable Altar, with an Inscription partly obliterated; only in the Middle, beneath the Cornice, are these words, MILITES VEXILLATIO III'.⁶³ Gordon offers no explanation of the letters in the first line.

⁵³ Anton 1893, 173.

⁵⁴ Somerset Heritage Centre DD/SH/5/382, p. 39.

⁵⁵ Latin, *Per fas aut nefas*, 'by fair means or foul'. The description of bailie Stark's stepmother as Clerk's 'landledie' is as yet unexplained.

⁵⁶ *RIB* I, 2165 = Keppie and Arnold 1984, no. 92; *RIB* I *Addenda* (1995), p. 797 (on *RIB* I, 2165). Auchenvole Castle, in the Kelvin Valley north of Bar Hill fort, was the home of the Stark family.

⁵⁷ NRS GD18/5024/1.

⁵⁸ NRS GD18/5024/3.

⁵⁹ *RIB* I, 2147.

⁶⁰ Irvine 1682, 122.

⁶¹ NLS Adv. MS 15.1.1, fol. 58v; cf. Gibson 1695, 1101.

⁶² *RIB* I, 2147, 2152.

⁶³ Gordon 1726, 57 with pl. 15.2.

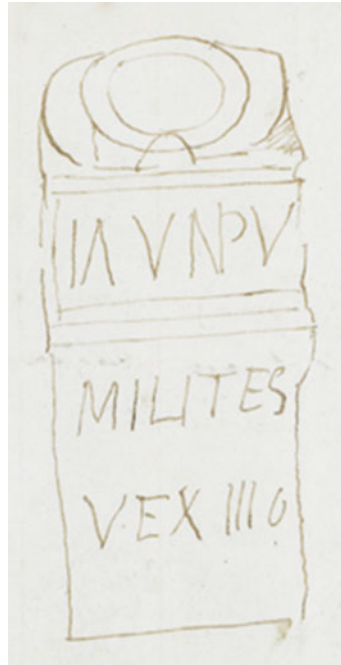


FIG. 13. Altar seen at Cumbernauld (NRS GD18/5068/3). (Reproduced by permission of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, Bt)

In September 1723 Richard Burn had gone to Cumbernauld where he ‘cald for Thos Baird conforme to orders & desierd the ston spok of in yors [No. 12], offering the half croun; he [i.e. Thomas Baird] wold not give it, at any rate until he acquainted My Lord’, presumably the Earl of Wigton. ‘I went along and he wold at norate let it go.’⁶⁴ It was presumably the Earl to whom Burn had spoken, having gone to the latter’s nearby home at Cumbernauld Castle. Burn goes on: ‘I met at Kilsyth fair with My Lord Wigtons factor who told me he heard My Lord say he was sorry he had refused you the stone but he was to be at Ed[inburgh] this winter wher he wold see you.’⁶⁵ Both the upper and lower parts of the altar were seen a few years later at Cumbernauld Castle by the Revd John Horsley who concluded from a study of their dimensions that they derived from separate stones.⁶⁶

DISCUSSION

The sequence of events in 1723 can be tentatively reconstructed from the contemporary correspondence,⁶⁷ from the annotations to the drawings being published here and from Gordon’s subsequent account in his *Itinerarium Septentrionale*.

⁶⁴ NRS GD18/5024/1.

⁶⁵ NRS GD18/5024/3.

⁶⁶ Horsley 1732, 201, pl. (*Scotland*) xx–xxi. Hence *RIB* I, 2147, 2152. See Keppie 2012b.

⁶⁷ We only have one side of the correspondence, viz. the letters addressed by Gordon and by Burn to Clerk at Penicuik and retained by him.

On 19 August 1723, Gordon was expecting to ‘go out of Town’ (i.e. Edinburgh) with Sir John Clerk the following day, on what he describes as his ‘antiquary peregrination’, which was to include tracing ‘the Vallum’ between Forth and Clyde.⁶⁸ Whether Gordon saw the Wall and its forts in Clerk’s company is unclear; he never claims to have done so, as he did Hadrian’s Wall in 1724, and the surviving correspondence suggests that he did not.⁶⁹ However, Gordon must at this time have set in motion arrangements for the stones he had located to be placed in the temporary custody of the change keepers at Kilsyth and Cumbernauld. In September Gordon was again on the Wall, this time travelling with James Glen of Linlithgow (see above); Glen was able to purchase two altars, one of them from Bar Hill fort,⁷⁰ much to Gordon’s chagrin, since he had intended to secure them for Clerk. Near Linlithgow, on their return journey, the two travellers unexpectedly met Richard Burn, belatedly only now setting out westwards on the task Clerk had set him. Burn quizzed Gordon about the ‘Nero’ stone and the altar at Auchenvole Castle (FIG. 14), which were among those he had been asked to secure, resulting in an altercation. On 28 September Burn reported to Clerk on the progress of his endeavours.⁷¹ In November we find Burn making another visit to the Wall, in search of those inscribed stones which had previously remained elusive.⁷² There is no hint that Burn was asked to seek out the relief sculpture at Auchendavy or Balmuldy, neither of which sites he seems to have visited; in general the antiquaries of the time were less concerned to acquire sculptured panels than stones inscribed with Latin texts.

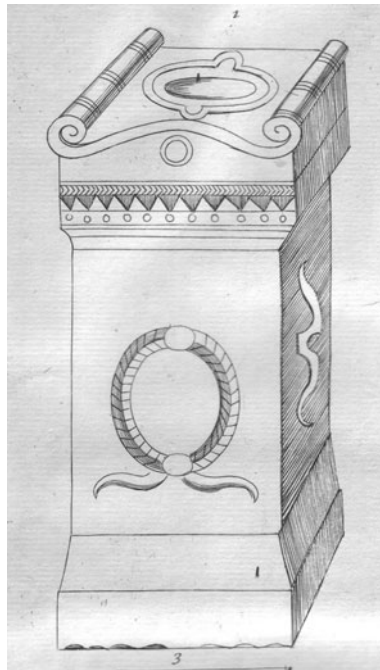


FIG. 14. Altar seen at Auchenvole Castle, as drawn by Alexander Gordon, rear and side faces.

⁶⁸ NLS Adv. MS 29.1.2 (iv), fol. 75 (printed in Wilson and Laing 1874, 375; cf. Piggott and Robertson 1977, no. 22, contributed by I.G. Brown).

⁶⁹ Gordon 1726, 77; see Birley 1962.

⁷⁰ Keppie and Arnold 1984, no. 96.

⁷¹ NRS GD18/5024/1.

⁷² NRS GD18/5024/3.

From Burn's letters we know that Sir John Clerk had provided him with a 'Memorandum', alluded to several times in both letters, which it is tempting to equate with the sheets of paper being discussed here, or which was based on them. It served as an authorisation for him to ask for the stones in Clerk's name, and established his bona fides. Burn left the memorandum with the local man whom he engaged to remove the 'Priapus' stone from the farm building at Westerwood (see above No. 8);⁷³ perhaps it contained a drawing of that stone, which does not feature here. Clerk had given Burn money to pay out to people holding the stones. Burn's letters detail the sums expended; he spent it all and borrowed more. The correspondence reveals the practicalities of antiquarian collecting in the early eighteenth century: diplomacy and perseverance were both needed, and alcoholic drink could smooth the path to acquisition.

We have a more formal account in Gordon's *Itinerarium Septentrionale* (1726). He is economical with the facts: for example, in relation to the 'Priapus' stone at Westerwood (FIG. 15), he states that 'This singular Curiosity I procured and gave it to ... Baron Clerk',⁷⁴ whereas we know from the correspondence that it was Richard Burn who hired a local man to remove it from the farm building at Westerwood and had it delivered to his house for onward transmission to Penicuik.⁷⁵



FIG. 15. The 'Priapus' stone at Westerwood, as drawn by Alexander Gordon.

The authorship of the various drawings on these sheets is uncertain. Economy of hypothesis might suggest that they were the work of Sir John Clerk himself, at the same time as he penned the accompanying annotations; but it is not at all clear that Clerk himself was at any of the sites. He must therefore have copied them out from a correspondent, most obviously Alexander Gordon.⁷⁶ Of the eleven stones drawn here, six are reported by Gordon in the *Itinerarium*, one is illustrated by him but not described, and four are absent; perhaps Gordon

⁷³ The inscription was not at first visible; perhaps it was only revealed when the stone was detached from the farm building.

⁷⁴ Gordon 1726, 56.

⁷⁵ Gordon's published account of the discovery in 1724 of a small altar at Carvoran (*RIB* I, 1805) on Hadrian's Wall (1726, 79) does not match Sir John's own journal of their visit to that fort (NRS GD18/2106, fol. 26 recto; see Birley 1962, 242).

⁷⁶ Gordon is otherwise known to have sent Clerk several drawings of inscriptions he had seen at forts on the Antonine Wall (NRS GD18/5023/3/1).

decided in the end that some were not genuine antiquities. In two cases Gordon's published drawings closely match these ones (Nos 8 and 12), but in other cases they do not (Nos 2, 3 and 11). The two which do match Gordon's were those which Clerk in the end failed to secure; perhaps Gordon subsequently re-examined the others at Penicuik House and drew more polished versions for publication.

By the end of 1723 Clerk had thus acquired the two building stones from Croy (here Nos 2 and 3), the altar at Auchenvole Castle, the 'Priapus' stone from Westerwood,⁷⁷ the inscribed pillar from Bar Hill (here No. 11), together with a fragmentary 'new stone' from Castlecary.⁷⁸ In March 1724 Richard Burn went at Clerk's request to Linlithgow, where he endeavoured without success to persuade James Glen to part with stones he had purchased in the previous year while travelling with Gordon.⁷⁹ During a visit to the line of Hadrian's Wall in the spring of 1724 Clerk acquired inscribed and sculptured stones from Housesteads and Carvoran.⁸⁰ At much the same time he came into possession of an inscribed centurial stone from Cramond, Midlothian, the estate of his wife's family.⁸¹ A few years later he secured a broken altar from Castlecary fort, then held at nearby Castle Cary castle.⁸² In 1731, in the course of a journey to Penrith, Cumbria, Clerk purchased a group of inscribed and sculptured stones at Middlebie, Dumfriesshire, from the nearby fort at Birrens.⁸³ His collection of antiquities was now well established. They were displayed at Penicuik House, Midlothian, alongside souvenirs of a two-year Grand Tour to Italy, in his study and in his garden.⁸⁴ In 1857 they were presented by Sir George Clerk, 6th baronet of Penicuik, to the then National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, Edinburgh (now part of National Museums Scotland), where they remain.⁸⁵

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, Bt, who generously allowed the use here of documents preserved in the Clerk of Penicuik Muniments, of which he holds copyright and which are on deposit at the National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, where Stuart McMillan and his colleagues in the Historical Search Room facilitated my examination of them. A grant from the Jennie S. Gordon Memorial Foundation covered the cost of photography. A marginal note in William Stukeley's own copy of his 1720 treatise, *An Account of a Roman Temple*, held by the Sackler Library, Oxford, is cited with permission of Dr Graham Piddock, Librarian-in-charge. I am glad also to thank Laurie Alexander, Elizabeth Bell, Professor Anthony R. Birley, Sybil Cavanagh at the West Lothian Heritage and

⁷⁷ Long missing, it was rediscovered at Penicuik House by Dr Iain Gordon Brown in 1976. See *RIB I Addenda* (1995), p. 797 (on *RIB I*, 2157).

⁷⁸ *RIB I*, 2153. NRS GD18/5024/3; see Keppie 2012a, 73.

⁷⁹ NRS GD18/5320/7. See Keppie 2012a, 72. Both are now lost.

⁸⁰ Birley 1962, 240, 242.

⁸¹ *RIB I*, 2137.

⁸² *RIB I*, 2154. In a letter to Roger Gale in June 1726 Clerk mentions traces of a second line of lettering on this stone, otherwise unreported (NRS GD18/5029; see Lukis 1880, 185). Horsley failed to find the stone at Penicuik in October 1728 (Horsley 1732, 202, pl. (*Scotland*) xxii); it is now lost. Clerk was also unable to secure the two altar-fragments held by the Earl of Wigton at Cumbernauld Castle (see above No. 12); they too are lost.

⁸³ Gordon 1732, 27; Clerk 1750; Prevost 1960.

⁸⁴ Keppie 2012a, 69.

⁸⁵ Anon. 1860. In 1739 Sir John Clerk purchased an inscribed building stone at Bowness-on-Solway on Hadrian's Wall (*RIB I*, 2061; see Lukis 1883, 95). A further stone in the collection at Penicuik, recording Abrucius of the century of Glicon (*RIB I*, 2164), is usually considered to have come from Croy Hill; however, it goes unmentioned in Clerk's contemporary correspondence and in the monographs of Alexander Gordon and the Revd John Horsley, so that its provenance should perhaps be considered uncertain.

Information Centre, Linlithgow, Morag Cross, Professor Stephen Driscoll, Dr Fraser Hunter and Dr Roger Tomlin. A draft was read by Morag Cross and Dr Iain Gordon Brown.

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