

AT A MEETING

HELD IN THE TOWN HALL

On Thursday evening the 12th November, 1857.

HENRY SPURR, ESQ.,

THE MAYOR, IN THE CHAIR,

The following paper was read by William S. Cortis Esq., M.D., Filey.

The place where the various articles I am about to bring before you were found, is a promontory known as the "Car-Naese," forming the Northern side of Filey Bay, and terminating in the Brigg. This promontory is constantly diminishing in extent due to the action of the sea on its rocky base, and of the rains and atmosphere on the diluvium forming its upper portion. After the heavy rains which fell a few weeks ago, a larger land-slip than usual occurred taking with it part of the wall marked on the plan A B, and in addition portions of charred wood, bones, &c. Some of the former lying among the debris, attracted the attention of a painter belonging to Filey, named Wilson, to whose observation these discoveries are entirely due. Thinking them to be pieces of jet, he at some risk went down among the falling cliff and having perceived their true character, proceeded to examine the spot whence they had fallen. Here, besides more bones and charred wood, he immediately found great quantities of broken pottery of unmistakeable Roman character. Having made this discovery public, it was determined by the owner of the land. The Rev Richard Brooke, of Gateforth, to have the place thoroughly examined. Beginning at the North edge of the cliff, where as I have said, part of the wall A B, had fallen, the various foundations of the walls marked in the plan were traced. This first wall did not present such a regular appearance as it does in the plan, owing to its foundations having slipped in various places, but we endeavoured to lay it down as accurately as possible.

Proceeding in a direction across the promontory, the other walls were traced, and the intermediate spaces carefully examined. The space from B to G, is 22 feet, from the wall B G to M N 10 feet, and from M N to L, also 10 feet. Opposite L, the wall which from G seemed to run about parallel to A B, inclined inwards somewhat. These walls were built of large stones, (in a few instances having tooled surfaces, and

set in mortar,) going down 4 feet below the surface, and resting on a floor of puddled clay. This floor extended over the greater part, perhaps the whole of the surface examined, but existed more particularly in the part where the five large stones were set, and was about 12 inches in thickness and appeared to have been covered with a layer of mortar. Upon this puddled floor were found the various articles here shown, amongst a quantity of black soil; and first of all the five large worked stones shown in the photograph. Some think these have been altars- to me they appear rather to have been intended for the bases of pillars, probably of wood, to support some heavy superstructure; they are nearly square, averaging about 1 foot 8 inches in height, and diminishing by two steps to the top, each "set-off" as it is technically termed, being rather more than 2 inches; the bases are rather over 2 1/2 feet square, the tops a little more than 1 1/2 feet; the centre stone is considerably the largest, and coved at the bottom set-off. In the middle of the top of each is a socket 7 inches square, and 3 inches deep, for the insertion of the pillar, which had apparently been of oak, as the remains of oak beams charred through were found in their immediate neighbourhood. On one side of the upper step of the centre stone there is carved in relief, a dog chasing a stag, the figure of the stag being very well carved. These stones had all been carefully set in mortar on the bed of puddled clay.

In the position shown in the plan were found two millstones, such as were ordinarily used in hand mills; the top one is complete, but broken in two, and has evidently been subjected to the action of fire. Of the lower one, about two-thirds were found, also in pieces. Near the northern stone was found a sixth, and smaller one, having every appearance of being intended for the support of a door-post. The parallelogram formed by these stones was 17 feet long by 14 feet. Close to the Eastern stone was found the fragment of shale, bearing part of two lines of an inscription:-

CÆSAR S E

Q V A M . S P E

It is most unfortunate that no more remained to reveal to us the history of the place, which can now only be conjecture.

The coins, upwards of forty in number of third and brass and apparently (for their excessively corroded state will not permit us to be positive) all of the later emperors, were chiefly found near tile large stones, as were also the more perfect specimens of pottery.

Over the whole surface were found in many places in large quantities, broken earthenware, bones of oxen sheep, deer goats, and fowls, including the legs of several game cocks, &c., but not any human remains.

The materials of which the urns are composed present all the varieties found in York, as described in the Rev. C. Wellbeloved's Eboracum with the exception, perhaps of that covered with green glaze. The larger amphorae are of the coarse bluish grey clay containing a large quantity of coarse sand, and sometimes mica. The smaller jars are usually of a fine well burnt clay, black, and often glazed on the outside sometimes lighter coloured within. Many of both large and small are, ornamented in various ways- red and lighter varieties are also found as also one piece of the Samian ware. This material is so elegant that it causes us great regret that more has not found.

One kind was found differing somewhat from any described by Mr Wellbeloved. This jar, which occupies such a prominent position in the photograph, had been crushed, but enough of the fragments were found to enable Mr. Joseph Knaggs with great industry and patience to accomplish a restoration. The material is a fine clay-burnt red, much inferior to the Samian ware, but probably ranking next to it. The jar, a wine vessel. is profusely ornamented with a scroll in white paint, stands about 18 inches high, and in about 14 inches in diameter at its widest part, has two handles, and on the rim between them a face, apparently of Bacchus, on the opposite side a little plain carving to correspond. Besides the articles already mentioned there were found copper rings and buckles, pins, arrow or spear heads of iron, the point of a sword, a sharpening hone, two pieces of glass, a large bead, &c.

There were several specimens of pottery, of British or Romano-British character, and among the overlying soil was found a stone axe head and a lias boulder which may have had a handle to it and been used as a weapon. Oyster, limpet, (*Patella athletica*) and muscle shells, were found in large quantities between the walls B G and M N, and more sparingly over the rest of the surface. Between the wall L M and the corresponding part of A B nothing was found, except the debris of the walls which appear to have been overthrown, neither was the puddled floor found here. On digging through the puddled clay we came sometimes to what appeared to be the soil in its natural state, at others this soil contained considerable quantities of large stones, and indeed there was every appearance of the place being constructed, at least at two distinct periods. When finally abandoned, it appears to have been after some conflict, the structure being thrown down and afterwards get on fire; no remains of charred wood being found in the mortice holes, as would probably have been the case had it been set on fire while still standing. The walls A B and G H, extended beyond the points marked but were not traced further; neither was the space

between G H and the south edge of the cliff examined. But in this cliff were found strata (as marked in the plan) containing more bones and pottery, and as they correspond to the strata examined they are doubtless continuous.

Interesting as these articles may be in themselves, I yet should not have thought them of sufficient importance to bring before this society, had it not been for certain conclusions of some consequence which I have formed in connection with them.

To a society like this I need not relate how much this part of the kingdom was frequented by the Romans ; how their armies constantly traversed it from the Humber to Whitby, and from their capital, York, to the Sea Coast. What well contested battles they had to fight with the fierce Brigantes, and the precautions they had to take against the ever recurring attempts of these brave barbarians to regain their freedom - neither need I remind you how Agricola, as we are told In his, life, surrounded this district with Castles and Forts, disposed with so much Judgment that none of it remained unguarded; how finally he swept the island from the Humber to Scotland, his army moving in two columns, each supported by a division of the fleet sailing along the corresponding coast. It is necessary, however, that I should run rapidly over these events, as it was their consideration that first caused me to reflect how important to them must have been such a bay as that of Filey At that time, of course, all the bays along the coast were in their natural state, no artificial piers or breakwaters defending them. On the whole of the Yorkshire coast, from *Abus Æstuarium* to *Dunum Sinus*

there its not a bay which can rival or approach to, in natural security the bay of Filey whilst it is almost the nearest part of the coast to York.

Thus naturally adapted for their purposes, the Romans appear to have, with their industry, undertaken some works, to make it still more secure. Somewhat beyond the middle of the Brigg striking off from it at an angle of 45 degrees we find the foundations of a pier or breakwater, now called the Spittal Rocks (from *Hospitium*) and at the angle of the bay another work still known as the Old. Key Rocks ; when these works existed above high water mark, they would complete an excellent harbour. for vessels of the size of Roman galleys; easy of access at all times of the tide, protected from every wind, and sufficiently capacious for one of their fleets. A few years ago there still existed here a stone to which the Roman sailors had often moored their galleys, and is even yet remembered as " the old mooring stone"; it was a flat piece of

rock projecting from the cliff, having through it a large hole worn by the frequent passing of ropes. It was some years since removed by some Goth who attempted to get stone from Filey Brigg, with which to build a pier at Bridlington.

When to these arguments was added the circumstance of the name *Ocellum Promontorium* being removed by geographers, from Spurn Point to Flamborough Head there could no longer lie any doubt that Filey Bay was the "Eulimenos Kolpos of Ptolemy (called also Sinus Gubrantuici" with a safe harbour,) and I believe we may now consider this to be an admitted fact.

We cannot doubt either that the present "Filey" is the *Portus Felix* (a mere translation into Latin of the Greek *Eulimenos Kolpos*), of Richard of Cirencester, which he calls a "city of the Parisii", a people who inhabited the shores of the *Sinus Gubrantuici*. The name alone is almost sufficient to identify the two, the change from *Felix* to "Filey" being so slight, and no more than was sure to occur during the Anglo Saxon period, from the analogy of their language; "Ley" is a favourite termination for the names of places with them, and thus as *Dunum Sinus* became "Dunsley," so *Portus* (or *Sinus*) *Felix* became "Filey." In fact, Filey has retained the addition of *Portus* to the present day, for so long as it was a more fishing village; indeed, within the last ten years it was seldom spoken of except as "Filey Bay," the *Portus* being thus retained; it is often still so spoken of, and I should not be surprised if the change to its present name could even be traced, for so late as about the year 1300, I find in the "*Rotuli Hundredorum*," of Edward I., an account (in somewhat cramped Latin,) of certain men having dealings in wool, at what appears to have been an illegal price,

and taking it "*ad portu de Fivle*." I am not aware of any one having previously attempted to account for the name "Filey," except as being derived from the resemblance of the Brigg to a File, which is a mere absurdity.

These matters being settled, it of course follows that the next promontory, bounding *Sinus Gubrantuici* on the north, -*Brigantium Extremum*, is Filey Brigg, a mere abbreviation of the original name, which one would have expected to have occurred to any one looking at the map of Roman Britain. As the name implies, this is the extreme southern point of the country occupied by the Brigantes, the Parish joining that people at Filey Bay. Now as *Portus Felix* is called a city of the Parisii, so the long-sought-for *Praetorium* is stated in the "*Notitia Imperii*" to be situated in the country of the Brigantes.

On the authority of *Cellarius Praetorium* was long placed, but always doubtingly, at Patrington. He appears to have been led into this error by regarding Spurn Point as *Ocellum*. Later it has been thought by some that it might be somewhere near Flamborough. In an article written by myself some time ago, I find this sentence: "I do not see what Bay his (Ptolemy's) *Eulimenos Kolpos* can possibly indicate except Filey Bay and *Praetorium* may perhaps have been a fortified

camp or station on the shores of this Bay". At the time this sentence written we were on the eve of the discovery of these remains, which I believe to be on the very site of *Prætorium*. We know from various circumstances that this could not have been situated further north than Scarborough whilst the country of the Brigantes being thus limited to the northern shores of Filey Bay, as its southern extremity, all to the south of this point including Flamborough is excluded. If we have proved Filey Bay to be "the bay with the good haven" of the Romans, it seems to follow naturally, 1st., that an anchorage of such consequence would be, in connection with an important fortified station on the land, the remains of which station we have indeed found ; 2nd, that as *Praetorium* must be situated about here, or between here and Scarborough, it is safe to conclude in the absence of reasons to the contrary -that it is the fortified camp in question.

These conclusions are supported by the direction of the roads leading from York to this coast, and the fact that the distance agrees precisely with that given by Antonine, whose 1st Iter passing by Stamford Bridge (*Derventio*) to *Praetorium* is 42 miles in length.

This iter gives the distance from:

York to Derventio 7 miles thence
York to Delgovitia 14 miles thence
York to Praetorium 22 miles thence

About its course from York to Stamford Bridge (*Derventio*) there can be no dispute. Thence a line of road across the wolds towards Bridlington is pretty easily traceable, and by some has been supposed to be the road in question, in which case *Delgovitia* would be somewhere near Fimber. I do not however share this opinion, but rather think this to have been a British and pre-Roman road, made as such usually were., on high open ground, presenting along its course British earthworks and a profusion of tumuli, containing British remains not having the directness of a Roman road, but tortuous, winding from place to place as convenience required; doubtless often used by the Romans when the occasion made it convenient for them so to do.

Another road, (which in the name of Wharram-le -street, and Roman remains found along its course gives evidence of their presence,) runs by Weaverthorpe and Foxholes to Hunmanby and was also doubtless often used by them. In fact, this part of the wolds is cut up with old roads the chief of which point more or less directly towards Filey and communicated freely with each other, the adjoining fields being studded with tumuli and marks of old entrenchments. I am however inclined to think that this Iter refers to a different route, which from

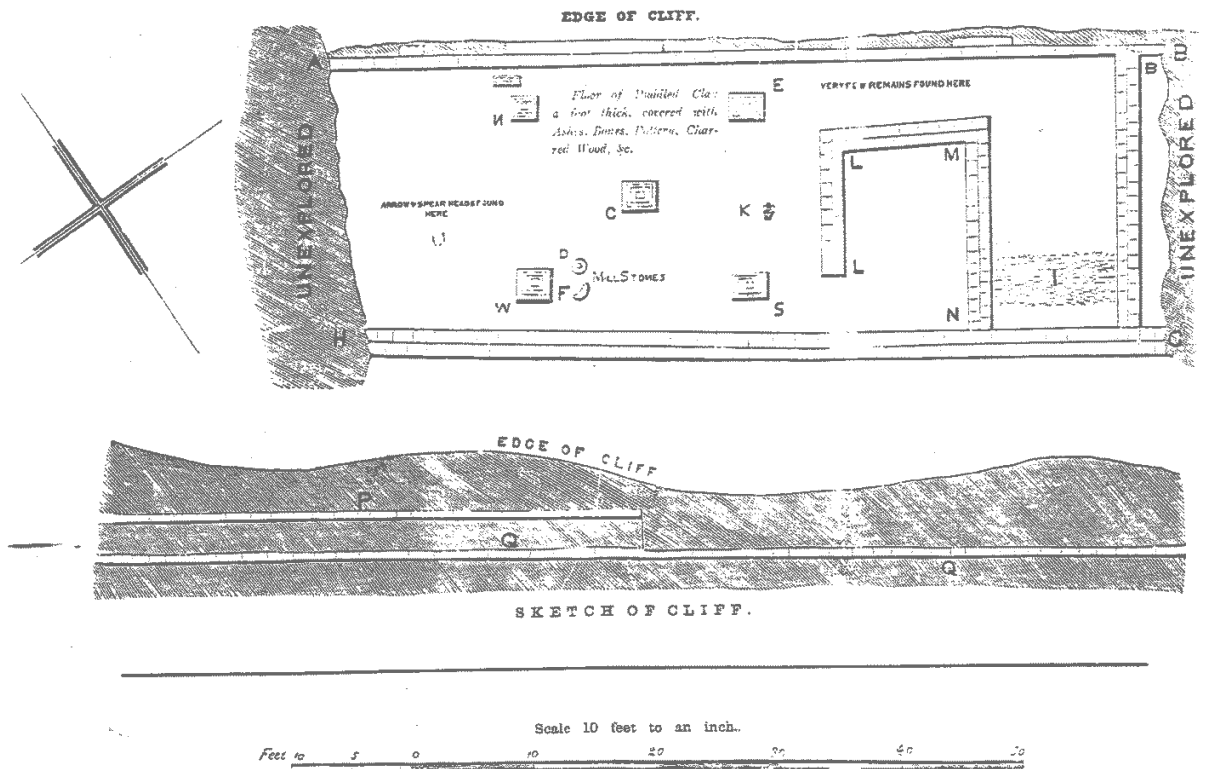
Stamford Bridge proceeded to Malton, notoriously a considerable station of the Romans and whose name, hitherto lost, I imagine to have been Delgovita. In distance from Derwentio, it agrees with the Iter. Northward from Malton goes the well known road to Dunum Sinus, and Eastwards another proceeds to Filey a distance of 22 miles exactly, passing in a nearly straight line along the foot of the wold hills a few hundred yards above the line of swampy forest which this part the vale of Derwent then presented This road at Flotmanby still called ' the street," appears to have been either entirely made, or at any rate very much improved by the Romans and the hill sides along its course present numerous traces of their flying camps, sometimes not more than two miles apart, entrenchments where doubtless, small bodies of the soldiers passing to or fro between *Eburacum* and *Praetorium*, often sought shelter to protect themselves from the sudden onslaught of the Brigantes issuing from the forests, whose swamps, inaccessible to the heavy armed Romans, afforded a safe passage to the light barbarian, unencumbered with defensive armour or clothing, as he fled from the repelled attack to his home in its tangled recesses.

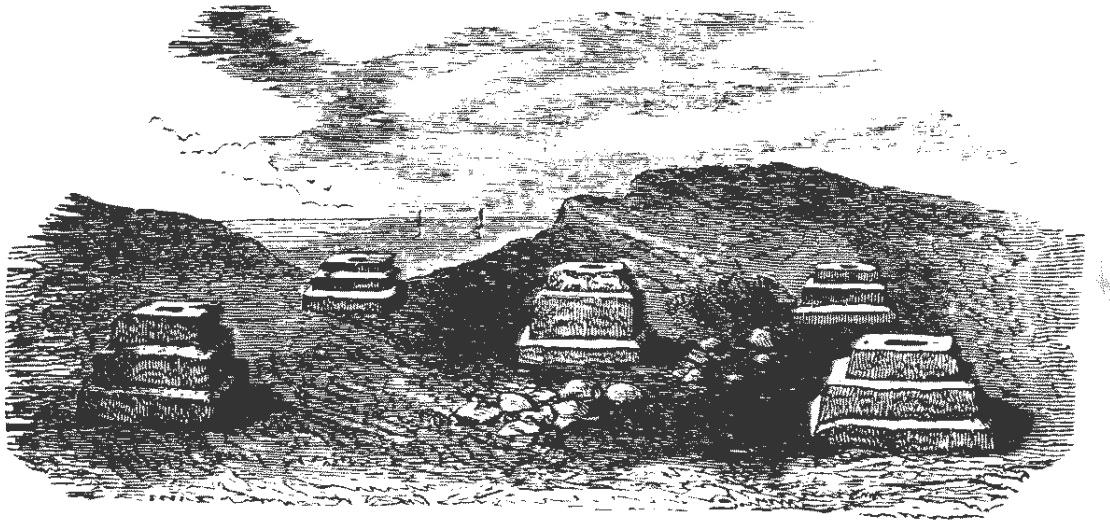
In addition to these circumstances, Cole in his history of Filey, says that "Old records speak of North and South Filey, separated by a deep ravine which now divides the church from the town, and the North from the East Riding." I have not yet met with these old records, but if he is correct, these divisions would respectively represent *Praetorium* and *Portus Felix*.

I would not wish to attach too much importance to a mere similarity of nomenclature, but cannot help remarking how singularly the modern names favour the views I have been presenting to you. As I said before, the promontory where these remains were found is still invariably called the "*Car-naese* ." the literal translation of which is " the promontory with the fort," the word " car or caer" being a constant prefix in the names of places where Roman camps have existed, as Caer-narvon, Car-lisle, &c. I previously remarked on the ready derivation of Filey Bay, from *Portus Felix*; and the promontory of the Brigg from *Brigantium Promontorium*. The least that can be said is that the names fit the theory remarkably well. After all, I am afraid a considerable portion of our proof must be negative, viz. :-the absence of stronger arguments in favour of any other place : for the promontory on which this station is situated has been so wasted by the action of the sea, that there is reason to fear the greater proportion of the buildings have fallen over the cliff-about 15 yards in width is all that is left-in the time of the Romans there may easily have been a couple of hundred, or even more. Still the whole of the neck of the promontory is so intersected by ridges and hollows, that we may expect further remains to be found and additional light to be thrown on the matter ; especially the road from the camp to join the one to *Eburacum* has still to be traced.

With these imperfect remarks, gentlemen, I beg to leave the subject with you for discussion. I think you will admit that to determine exactly the site of such a station as *Praetorium* is worth any trouble we may have, taken in meeting together this evening; and I have no doubt there are gentlemen present whose remarks will elucidate the matter beyond anything I have been able to say on the subject.

PLAN OF RUINS AS EXCAVATED.





SQUARED STONES REFERRED TO.



REMAINS OF POTTERY, ETC.