

CAMULODUNUM.

BY J. H. ROUND, M.A., LL.D.

IT is a useful task for an archaeologist to place on record in our *Transactions* the scattered information on the antiquities of our county which appears, or has at some time appeared, in various publications. For a future historian of Essex this would be of much assistance.

To the *Essex County Standard* of 28th August, 1920, there was contributed an article, two columns in length, on "Camulodunum," by Dr. W. de Gray Birch,¹ as a result of "The recent (1919) Congress of the British Archaeological Association at Colchester," in which he took part. The writer, in this paper, dealt "more particularly with the numismatic evidence of the British period," especially the coinage of Tasciovanus and Cunobelinus. It is, surely, a singular fact that he does not once mention Morant's work (1768), which contains a plate illustrating the coins of the latter monarch, found at Colchester,² or the beautiful plate of "Early British coins current in Essex"³ which faces p. 204 (vol. ii.) of the *Victoria History of Essex*. Nor does he speak of that summary (from numismatic evidence) of the succession of Tasciovanus and Cunobelinus, which is found in that work (vol. ii., p. 203). He also ignores Mr. Cutts' excellent little work on Colchester (1888), in which Tasciovanus and his son, Cunobeline, are duly found (pp. 8-9) on the evidence of coins. It is even more remarkable that, in his observations on the site of 'Camulodunum,' he should have ignored Morant's elaborate dissertation (pp. 12-17) on the problem "Whether this town were the ancient *Camulodunum*.'

For our local historian deserves great credit for his summary and criticism of the arguments then current on both sides. He himself relied specially on the evidence supplied by the coins of "King Cunobeline" found at Colchester (p. 13). I have searched in vain the paper of Dr. de Gray Birch for any fresh evidence against the recognised claim of Colchester or in favour of those of Maldon or other Essex localities.⁴ He oddly asserts that "many antiquaries

¹ Only his initials were appended.

² Facing p. 191 and described on p. 184.

³ From specimens in the British Museum.

⁴ Mr. Miller Christy's 'Bibliography' of recent papers on the subject, which is printed in our *Transactions* (vol. xv., pp. 196-7), had already mentioned those of the Rev. A. C. Yorke. *etc., etc.*, cited by Dr. Birch.

appear to have now (*sic*) rejected "the view that 'Camulodunum' was at Maldon "in favour of Colchester." Morant is entitled to a prominent position among those antiquaries, but he is not "now" living.

Since that very untrustworthy guide, the antiquary Camden, urged the (supposed) resemblance in sound between Maldon and Camulodunum, this has remained the stock argument of Maldon's advocates, and Dr. Birch urges accordingly that "the remarkable similarity of the place-name affords very strong evidence in favour of Maldon." No advance, we see, has been made since the days of Camden's guess.

My chief object, however, in drawing attention to the matter is to bring to the notice of archaeologists in Essex, and especially in Colchester, a paper which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*,¹ but which seems to be now forgotten. It is entitled "The Romans at Colchester," and was evidently written by someone who combined full local knowledge with a considerable mastery of Roman history. I have seen it attributed to Dean Merivale, who may well have been its author. Holding the college living of Lawford (near Manningtree) from 1848 to 1870, he would have the local knowledge, and a tablet there erected to his memory proclaims him "Historian of Rome."² For his text he took two of the treatises of Mr. Jenkins, a local clergyman—one of them (1842) entitled "Observations on the site of Camulodunum,"³ and the other setting forth his craze that Colchester castle was built as a "Temple of Claudius Caesar" (1852), with the exposure of the latter by Mr. Cutts, our former honorary secretary, in 1853—and, while discussing the former in a temperate and scholarly manner, denounced, of course, the latter as the folly that it was.

As to 'the site of Camulodunum,' the writer held, from the evidence afforded by the Itineraries, that it "cannot reasonably be placed elsewhere than at Colchester or in its immediate vicinity," and dismissed as follows the claim of Maldon :

The notion advanced by Camden, and adopted from him by Horsley, that Camulodunum is to be found at Maldon, is now very generally abandoned. It can only be reconciled with the Itinerary by supposing a monstrous sinuosity in the Roman road from London; and it was suggested probably on no other ground than the occurrence of the name spelt Camulodunum on a lapidary inscription, which is opposed generally to the MSS. and to the uniform authority of coins, the orthography of which is far more deserving of our confidence (p. 76).

¹ June, 1855 (vol. 97, pp. 71-105).

² *E.A.T.*, vol. viii., p. 290.

³ *Archaeologia*, vol. xxix.

He admitted, nevertheless, that Lexden, probably, "stands on the site of the chief British city" in eastern England, basing that conclusion chiefly on the evidence of the "British roads," as he considered them to be, and its topographical position.

The Dean, however, was, we find, far too vague in his language; nor could he support his view by any definite arguments. A careful collation of his conclusions (pp. 76-7), with those of Mr. Cutts (pp. 11-12), a generation later (1888), has shown me that they were identical; both writers held that 'Camulodunum' occupied the triangular area bounded by the Colne and the Roman river to the east, and defended on the west, at the base of the triangle, by the great rampart now known as Gryme's dyke, on Lexden Heath. This dyke runs south from Newbridge, West Bergholt, to the Roman river, as Dr. Laver has shown, in an almost straight line. Now, "this tableland, defended by its rivers and rampart," as Mr. Cutts styles it, was, he wrote, "the large area which we assume to be the Oppidum"; the Dean had described it as "the peninsula on the neck of which Lexden stands, . . . amounting to about twenty square miles." These conclusions may be sound; but, obviously, they do not identify the alleged British Oppidum with Lexden, and Lexden only.

The importance of exactitude in statements is well shown by the late Dr. Laver's comment on the alleged site of *Camulodunum* at Lexden.¹ Dealing with the paper by Mr. Jenkins, which the Dean had taken as his text, but which Dr. Laver described as a "fanciful account, . . . the misleading map and account of the roads of Camulodunum"²—he took "the Rev. Author" and "the Rev. Prebendary Scarth" to have placed the site of *Camulodunum* between two earthworks on Lexden Heath,³ and commented on such a theory as follows:

Had sufficient attention been paid to the locality, I cannot think the authors named could ever have started such a theory. The area enclosed by these banks is a series of valleys. . . . For these reasons I am inclined to think that the present site of Lexden was never the site of the British Camulodunum; if so the camp would have consisted principally of valleys with the eastern defences above the camp, and with an inside ditch, from which the camp would have been commanded.'

¹ *E.A.T.*, vol. iii. [N S.], pp. 128-g.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 134-5.

³ Mr. Scarth, in his "Roman Britain," writes that "their capital was Camulodunum, not far from Colchester, at Lexden, where very extensive earthworks still remain" (p. 28). . . . The vast earthworks still remaining at Lexden, one mile from Colchester, give some idea of the strength and extent of the capital of Cunobeline (p. 38).

⁴ Compare here the comment of Mr. Miller Christy on p. 197 of this volume.

It may be of service to complete this *catena* of opinion by a passage from the *Retrospections* (vol. ii.) of the late Mr. Charles Roach Smith, cited in the same volume of our *Transactions* :

It is not a little remarkable that, even with sensible writers and in standard works, there should be such confusion and error respecting *Camulodunum* and *Colonia*. They were identical; the former being the great British *Oppidum*, the latter the name given by the Romans to the *Colonia* which they built at about a mile from the *Oppidum* (p. 185).

Again, the Dean's arguments, which were afterwards those of Mr. Cutts, are sadly vague in character. The Itineraries, wrote the former, compel us to place the *Oppidum* "at Colchester, or in its immediate vicinity" ; "the site of *Camulodunum*," Mr. Cutts urged, upon the same evidence, "was at or near Colchester." Both writers relied upon the fact that "three British roads" converged upon this area; both writers, again, appealed to the dangerous argument that the character of this area suggested a British *Oppidum*, as described by Caesar. "When we picture to ourselves," the Dean observed, "what a British *Oppidum* was, . . . we shall be struck with the perfect correspondence of Lexden with such a position"; "this tableland," Mr. Cutts wrote, "corresponds very exactly with Caesar's description of a British *Oppidum*."¹

In his recent interesting and stimulating paper on "Roman Roads in Essex,"² Mr. Miller Christy has said, of "the British town of *Camulodunum*," that its "site was probably on Lexden Heath" (p. 197), and though his phrase (p. 194), "the British headquarters at *Camulodunum* (Lexden)" is somewhat vague, there is at least no vagueness in his statement (p. 203) that on Lexden Heath "is a complication of roads, trackways, and earthworks, which led Sir Richard Colt Hoare and the Rev. Henry Jenkins to conclude that here was the British capital, *Camulodunum*, while the site of the Roman *Colonia* lay two miles further east, where Colchester now is." This, at least, is a definite theory, while that of the Dean, as I have shown, is so vaguely expressed as to remain *in nubibus*. He does, however, later on (pp. 86-7), suggest that the name *Colonia* was "perhaps appropriated to the site of Colchester," and *Camulodunum* "generally to the old British enclosure." He further asserts that "the old British site was abandoned, and the colony of *Camulodunum* confined to the locality of the present town." Finally, in the opening words of his fourth chapter, Mr. Cutts definitely asserted that "within the triangle which has been assumed to be

¹ It is, I fear, impossible for any unbiassed person to consider these coincidences merely accidental. This deprives Mr. Cutts' arguments here of original value.

² pp. 190-229 of this volume *E.A.T.*

the ancient Oppidum of Camulodunum, at the north-east corner of it, . . . a dry ravine runs up from the river valley into the table-land, and cuts off a promontory of it. It was the point of this promontory which the builders of the new *Colonia* chose for their site" (p. 32).

Apart from the site of *Camulodunum*, several other problems connected with "the Romans at Colchester" are discussed by the learned writer; politely describing his fellow-cleric, Mr. Jenkins, a clergyman of the neighbourhood, as "a man of genius," he followed, of course, Mr. Cutts in rejecting the wild theory that the castle was originally a Roman temple. He then touched upon the usual problems, the locality at which Suetonius defeated the British forces, the British bishops at the Council of Aries, the Coel and Helena legend, and the speculations as to the identity of the Pudens and Claudia who occur in the epistle to Timothy. Of more value than these speculations are the learned writer's statements on matters within his own knowledge. I do not here refer to his rejection of "the opinion that the first British Christian was a princess of Camulodunum," on the ground that "the piety and virtues of the ladies of Colchester are too well-known to require any such illustration" (p. 100), but to such personal touches as his statement that he had himself seen a collection of forty or fifty "coins of the emperors, made by a single enquirer by casual purchases from workmen within a period of only six or seven years," or to his mention of the important fact that the Roman road which issued from the Balcerne gate had recently been traced at the point where it crossed the present highway.¹ The late Professor Haverfield enquired of me what was the actual evidence for the existence of this road, and I could then only refer him to Dr. Laver's statement.²

1 "In digging foundations by the side of the Lexden road, a little way out of Colchester, the workmen came lately upon traces of the Roman way which crossed it. The pavement had vanished, but the stratum upon which it was originally built is a mass of concrete, or indurated gravel, upon which their tools could with difficulty make an impression" (p. 94).

2 In his paper on "Roman roads near to and those radiating from Colchester," in our *Transactions* (vol. iii. [N.S.], pp. 124-5, with map), where he states that the Roman road from the Balcerne gate "crossed the present road diagonally just beyond the Hospital." As he dated the discovery of the remains of the Roman road in 1884, this discovery must have been made fully thirty years after that which the Dean records. Of this earlier discovery he must have been unaware, for he makes no mention of it. The Dean's description of the stratum upon which the actual road had rested is entirely confirmed by that which Dr. Laver has given on pp. 124, 126. The map which forms the frontispiece to Mr. Cutts' *Colchester* (1888) shows very clearly the crossing of the Lexden road by this "old Roman road," but is quite irreconcilable with his statement on p. 40, that "the discoveries of recent years have proved conclusively that the Roman road left the Balcerne gate nearly, but not quite, at right angles to the western wall." On the map the angle is about 45 degrees.

I may fitly finish this paper by quoting from the Dean's eloquent peroration on Colchester :

Where else in Britain can he [the archaeologist] find more abundant traces of Roman life and manners? Which of our towns besides presents such a monument of Roman fortification? . . . About what other locality, we may add, do so many traditions of our primitive Christianity cluster?

Closing with a graceful allusion to the labours undertaken by our own Society, he pleaded for the preservation in a Museum of her own of "the unnumbered treasures " still to be brought to light.