

VI. *Part of some Letters from Mr. Christopher Hunter to Dr. Martin Lister, F. R. S. concerning several Roman Inscriptions, and other Antiquities in Yorkshire.*

Stockton, Apr. 12. 1702.

S I R,

I Humbly beg pardon for so long delaying to absolve the Promise I formerly made of presenting you with an account of another *Roman* Station in the County of *Durham*, at a Village called *Ebbebest*: but tho' I was born near that place, and since my promise have often carefully view'd it, I cou'd not till very lately satisfy myself so far as to be able to reduce my mind from the vulgar opinion, that this has never been more than a Place nam'd from that Pious Virgin *St Ebba*, which is all Mr *Cambden* says of it.

It has been surrounded with a Wall of hewn Stone, and seems to have been an exact square of about 200 yards on every side: here have been Suburbs towards the West, South, and perhaps East, of a considerable extent: but towards the North the Wall has stood upon the top of a steep bank, under which runs the River *Derwent*, in which not long since was found a long Altar, but its Inscription is defaced: as also a lesser Stone, with this word HAVE, not on the front, but on one side; this Stone is in my possession. There is another (which is used as a Grave-stone) it lies before the Church-door, which by the Engraving of a Man from the Breast upwards in a *Roman* dress, seems to have been *Roman*. These are all the Stones I can meet with that have ever had any *Roman* Inscription. I enquired of the most understanding Inhabitants concerning what has been found there whilst they digged up the Ruins of this place; all confess they have dug up many Inscriptions, but (because no body there understood them) they always broke them: and they add, that in most places they plainly discern two different foundations of ruin'd Houses, and most Stones thus dug up are ting'd of a deep red colour, undoubtedly by Fire. That part of the Village which stands within the Walls is call'd the *Mains*, and there are the most ruins: here are many Tiles dug up of red Clay, but not one entire.

About twenty years ago, some out of a Project of finding a Treasure, and prompted forward by the Tradition of an Iron Gate,

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supposed to be about eighty yards from the place where they made the first attempt, began to undermine an old Foundation still visible on a Hill side, and after they made a small progress found a considerable quantity of a melted Metal, which at first view they supposed had been Silver, but upon a second examination it proved to be no more than Pewter, which discouraged the Undertakers so much that they desisted from further Enquiry.

Watling Street passes by this Place about a hundred yards to the West: for it could not conveniently be brought through the Town without a tenfold charge, by reason of a Brook two or three hundred yards to the South, whose Banks are not a little uneven, and the above mentioned steep hill towards the North makes a Passage that way next to impossible.

I can meet with no certainty whether the *Romans* have had a Bridge over *Derwent* at *Ebchester*, so dare determine nothing as to that point; but the Affirmative seems to me more reasonable, both from the number of Souldiers who must needs have passed that way, as also from the considerable largeness of this River.

The Passage in the Second Book of *Ptolemy's* Geography, *Sub Elgovis & Olludinis ad utraq; Maria habitant Brigantes in quibus Urbes Epiacum, Vinnovium, Caturaetionum; Calatum, Isurium, Rhigodunum, Olicana, Eboracum*, seems to persuade that this may probably have been *Epiacum* of the *Romans*, especially if it can be granted that this Author mentions only the Places in the Eastern Part of this Province (and only *Epiacum*, if placed at *Papcastle*, at *Rhigodunum*, if at *Ribchester*, thwart this assertion.) And indeed I am apt to believe that *Ptolemy* begins his Enumeration of the Places among the *Brigantes* at the Place nearest *Hadrian's* Wall, and has advanced in order (tho' with some Omissions) to *Eboracum*, the chief Town in the Province: And further, the Modern name *Ebchester* agrees as well with *Epiacum* as *Papcastle* does, for all know the Mutation of P into B to be a thing not unusual. I hope this Conjecture will not be opposite to the Authority of other Writers, whom I'm sorry I have not a convenience to consult upon this Point.

To morrow I intend to go view some more Stones which I lately had an account of; if there be any Inscriptions of value, I'll let you know the first opportunity. I am

S I R,

Your most Obliged Servant,

Chrif. Hunter.

S I R,

I Had acquainted you with the success of my Journey before this time if the expectation of an Answer to that Letter I made bold to write to you some weeks since about a *Roman* station in this County, had not put a stop to my Resolutions.

Those Inscriptions, I doubt not, will find a favourable reception; tho', 'tis to be confess'd, some of them are not so perfect as I could have desired: and most of the Words in that mark'd. Tab. 1. No 1. are so artificially erased, that I am apt to believe it has been thus defaced upon some Revolution in the *Roman* Government. This, (with several more, beautify'd with Inscriptions and Engraving, but which are now taken away) was dug up some time ago in a Field called the *Bower*, it is about half way between the *Roman* Wall and South *Tine*, and is near two miles West from *Busse gap*; here has been a *Roman* Garrison kept, it has been surrounded with a single Wall, and is square; 'tis nothing now but heaps of Stones, overgrown with Bushes.

Some years ago, on the West-side of this Place, about fifty yards from the Walls thereof, there was discover'd under a heap of Rubbish a square Room strongly vaulted above, and paved with large square Stones set in Lime; and under this a lower Room, whose Roof was supported by rows of square Pillars of about half a yard high: the upper Room had two niches, like (and perhaps in the nature of) Chimnies on each side of every corner or square, which in all made the number sixteen; the Pavement of this Room, as also its Roof, were tinged black with Smoak. The Stones used in Vaulting the upper Room have been marked as our Joyners do the Deals for Chambers; those I saw were number'd thus, X. XI. XIII. The man who farms this ground presented me with a winged Image, it has been about three Inches long, but now wants the Head and Feet.

The other Inscriptions were all found near the *Housesteads*, a Place so called from the abundance of Ruins; this is about half a mile from *Busse gap* towards the West, and is placed just within the *Roman* Wall; among the Ruins I found several Pedestals, two or three Pillars, two Images, but somewhat defaced. The Stone Tab. 1. No 2. lies again a Hedge a quarter of a mile from this place. That marked Tab 1. No 3. tho' only part of an Altar, I thought worthy transcribing, because I am in hopes of recovering the other part as soon as Harvest is over, this part having been tore up by the Plough. The two Altars Tab. 1. No 4. and 5. are very legible; I found them on a rising ground South of the *Housesteads*; they call it *Chapel hill*, and suppose a Foundation, which is visible there, to have been a Chapel; and say that within the memory of their Fathers they used to bury their dead here: I dare not determine in this point.

I wish heartily any thing worth notice may have occur'd, and assure you that I will always endeavour (as much as business will permit) to furnish you with such things as seem worthy your acceptance. I am

S I R,

Your most humble Servant,

Stockton, May 15. 1702.

Chris. Hunter.

S I R,

I Have nothing so much worth returning as an account of my last Journey into *Northumberland* on the 18th and 19th of this instant. I found *Watling Street* very visible from near *Ebchester* almost to *Corbridge* which is about seven miles: here beyond expectation I met with this Altar marked Tab. 2. a. I drew both sides of it, b. and c. as well as I could; at the top it is hollow at least eight inches deep: the Inscription is all legible except the second and last letters in the first line, the second and third in the third line, and the third in the last, which are a little doubtful; the Altar is at present in the Church-yard, it has been there a long time.

The Fragment d. I found in the front of a House in the same Town, it is still sufficient to shew the real value which ought to have been set upon the Inscription, if it had been entire: I was very sensible at first view that History would receive some light from this if perfect; and in order to retrieve the remaining part (which I am persuaded is still buried in the Ruins) I proffer'd any reasonable gratification to whosoever would undertake to procure it for me, but had the ungrateful answer that the person that found this being dead, no other body could go to the place where it was formerly digged up. This, Sir, plainly shews the irretrievable loss Learning sustains by the sluggish neglect of some men.

From hence I travell'd upon this Street almost to *Refingham*; it is very visible all this way; about a mile South from *Refingham* there is a Pillar of about eight foot in length, which has stood by the way side, but is now fallen: At this Place I was shewn the Inscription in a Wall on the inside of a House: I got a Medal which was found here a year ago, 'tis a Brass one, the Emperors name worn out, AVG PIVS very legible, but by the figures of other Medals I take it to be *Antoninus*; on the Reverse a Wolf without any Inscription.

The next *Roman* Town I visited was *Rocheſter*; *Watling Street* is very visible some part of it, but how far I cannot tell, not having traced it. I found the Altar f. near this place. I cannot say this is the largest, but think it has been one of the best fortified Places the *Romans* have been Masters of in the North: and indeed it stood in need of being so, since it was not only a Frontier Town, but, as *Maestrich* is at present, was surrounded by Enemies.

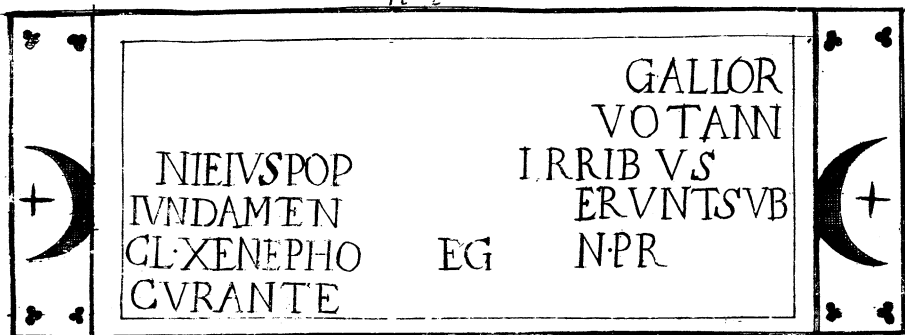
From this Place I return'd to the *Roman* Wall at *Carron*, between which and *Walwich* the Wall has been repair'd, and fronted with its old Stones again, upon which I found the Inscription Tab. 2. No 1. 2. 3. 4. &c. These, tho' of small moment, I took pains to copy and transmit to you, being a thing (to me) new: and I doubt not but it's possible to meet with many more of this Nature, when I have an opportunity of spending a little more time than I had at collecting these, which I intend as soon as business permits.

As to the report of uncommon Plants growing on or near the Wall, I find it groundless unless some are pleas'd to think the *Saxifraga alba radiu granulosa* I B to be such; but I can assure you that it is not at all uncommon in our Northern Climate. I make bold to subscribe myself

Stockton, May 29. 1702

Your most obliged Servant,
Chris. Hunter.

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N^o. 1.

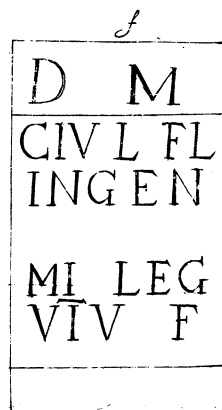
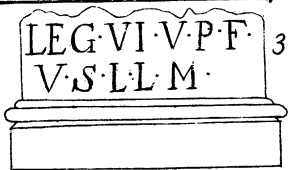
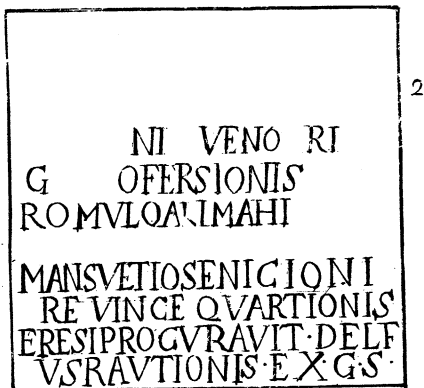
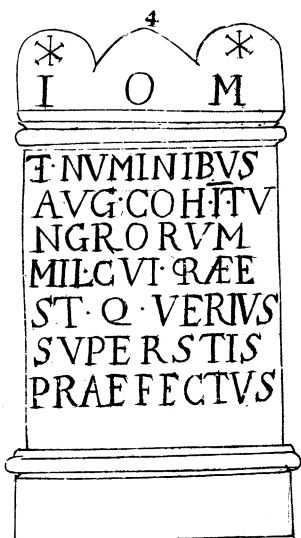
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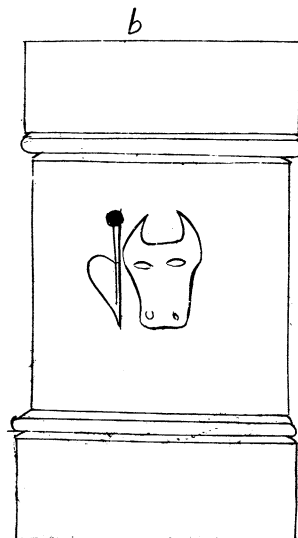
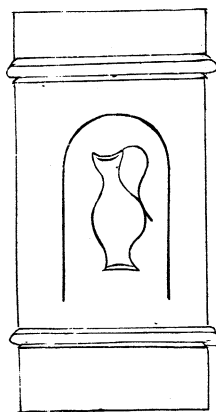
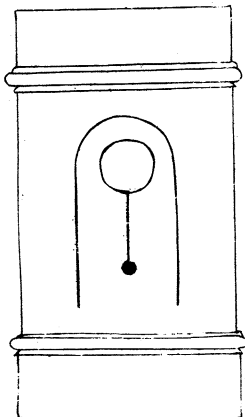
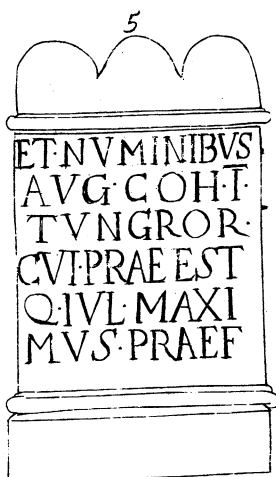
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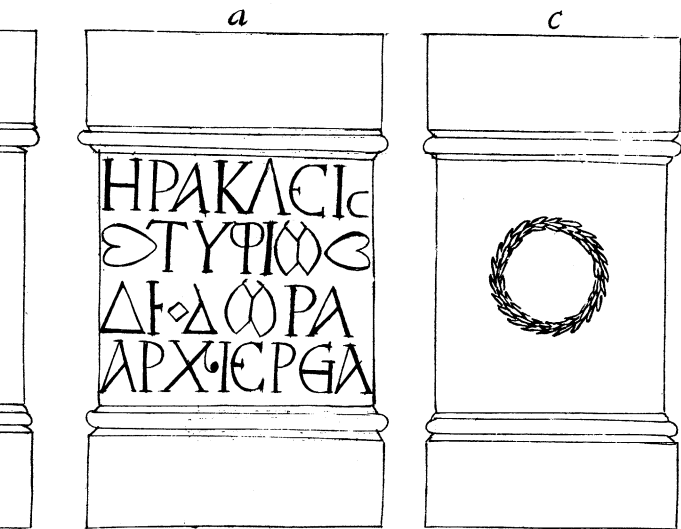
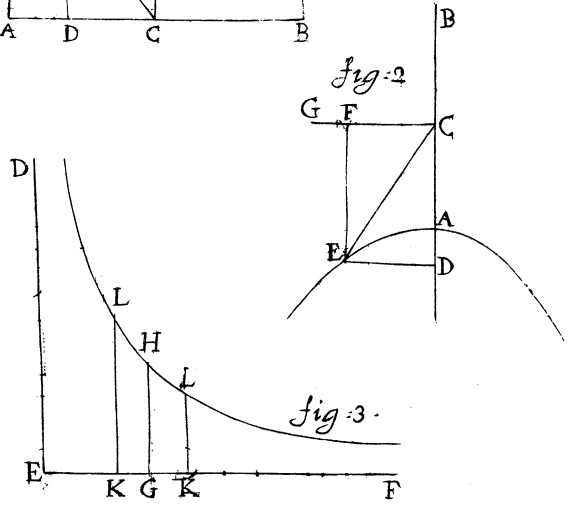
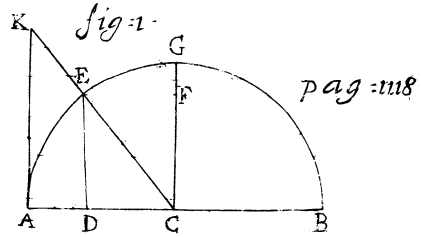
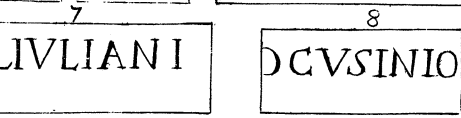
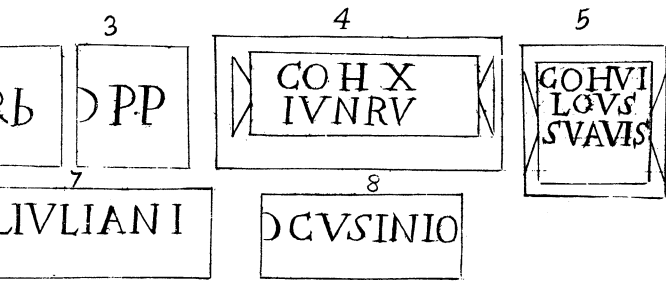
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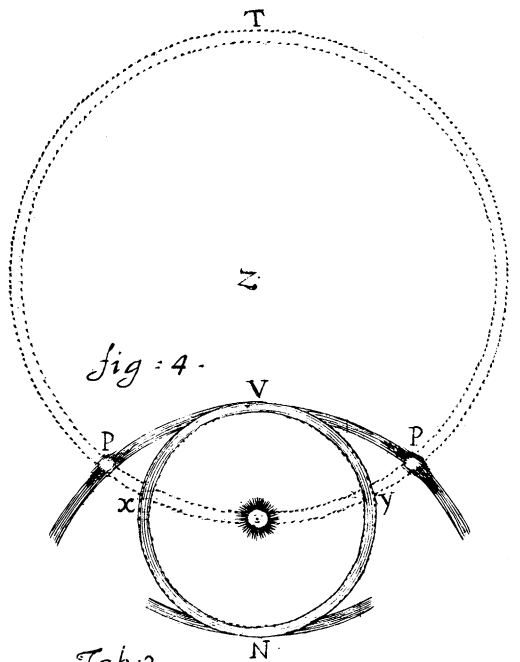
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Tab: 1.



Tab: 2.



Tab: 3.

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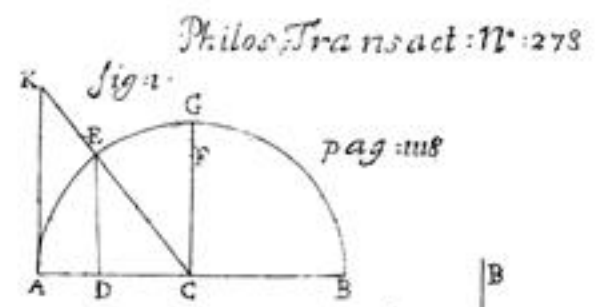
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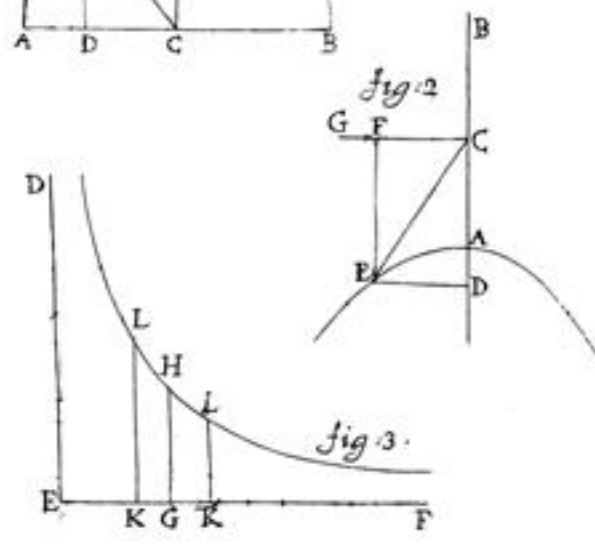
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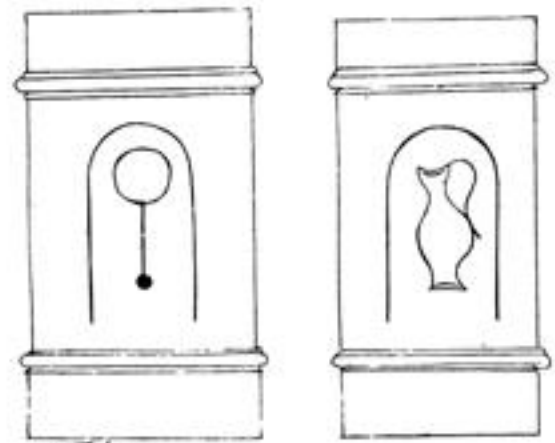
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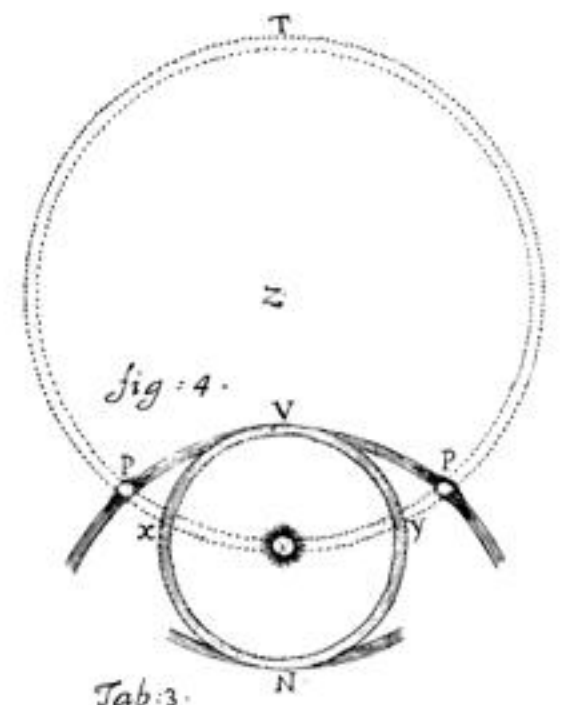
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Tab. 1.



Tab. 2.



Tab. 3.