

The Lakeland-Lancashire Puzzle

Where do Roman-era place names belong in Lancashire and neighbouring counties?

Rivet and Smith (1979) found the Antonine Itinerary's *iter* 10 the "most difficult" to interpret. In general, AI follows known Roman roads and reports mileages that fairly accurately match distances between definite Roman forts, or plausible places to spend the night or change horses. Here we list the names and distances of *Iter* 10 in the opposite direction, from south to north. Everything starts off reasonably well on a general course roughly equivalent to the modern M6 motorway:

[Mediolano](#) can be placed confidently at Whitchurch, Shropshire

then 19 Roman miles = 28.1 km to

[Condate](#) was probably at Middlewich (not Northwich), Shropshire

then 18 Roman miles = 26.6 km to

[Mamcunio](#) was at Manchester

then 19 Roman miles = 28.1 km to

[Coccio](#) was at Wigan, Lancashire

then 20 Roman miles = 29.6 km to

[Bremetonnaci](#) was the important fort at Ribchester

then 27 Roman miles = 40 km to

[Galacum](#) was the fort at Burrow-in-Lonsdale, probably also Ptolemy's Καλατον/Καλαγον

then 19 Roman miles = 28.1 km to

[Alone](#) was probably the fort at Low Borrowbridge, number 9 of 10 places called *Alauna*

then 12 Roman miles = 17.8 km to??

Now the trouble starts, because no Roman site is known 18 km by road from Low Borrowbridge. We are reluctant to "peel back" the route by casting doubt on the location of *Alone*, because the route from *Galacum* has been worked out by [Ratledge](#), perfectly matching AI's stated distance, and because *Alone* looks like the ancient river name *Alauna* and the modern Lune. The next name is

[Galava](#) then 18 Roman miles = 26.6 km to

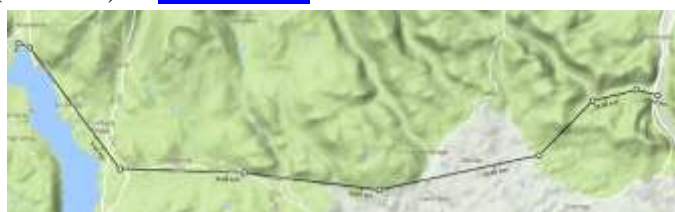
[Clanoventa](#) for which an obvious parallel is ND's *Glannibanta*, for which the natural candidate is the Roman fort at the head of Lake Windermere, near Ambleside.

An earlier version of this text suggested that *Galava* was at [Mardale](#), a lost village now submerged under the waters of Haweswater Reservoir, but that argument is not convincing, even with the comment of Margary (1973) that his Road 74 (known as High Street) indulges in "prodigies of mountain-climbing". The least bad explanation may be that the Itinerary contains a copying error and *Galava* is a mistaken intrusion, provoked by *Galacum* two lines earlier. (So too, may be *Galluvio* in RC.)

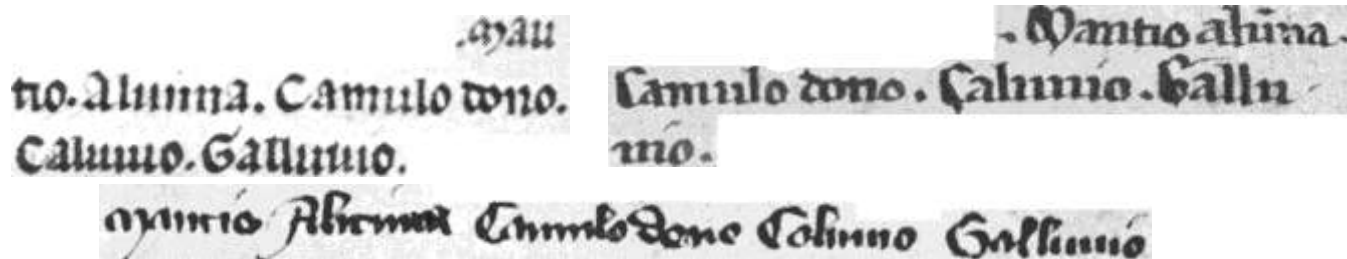
Disregarding *Galava* and the mileage preceding it, we now get a correct reading for the end of *iter* 10 as

[Alone](#) – 18 Roman miles (26.6 km) – [Clanoventa](#)

There is indeed a viable route from Low Borrowbridge to Ambleside, about 27 km long, fort centre to fort centre. It starts out along a recognised Roman road towards Kendal, before heading across farmland toward Windermere village, roughly as shown in this picture taken from Google Maps.



Now what about RC's [Cantaventi](#)? R&S accused the Ravenna Cosmography of being grossly corrupted, but in fact it is the number-one source of ancient British names, apparently read from maps quite reliably and in a logical order, though not stating mileages and not necessarily following known roads. Nevertheless the Cosmography's three manuscripts contain some handwriting that is hard to decipher and may have misdirected past copyists. In this area we need to overrule several spellings that Richmond and Crawford (1949) reported, using the excellent photographs they published. Here are scans of the vital parts:



Notice how hard it is to distinguish *n* from *u*, but that *uu* (= *uv* in modern spelling) is clearly to be preferred in the adjacent *Caluuo* and *Galluuo*. (There is a similar issue with [Calleva](#), where majority opinion currently suggests that AI's *Galleva* was just a variant spelling for a single place.) Here are our best guesses for the *Cosmography* spellings, preceded by their number in R&C's list, followed by their likely locations:

- 109 [Mantio](#) (preferable to *Mautio*) = almost certainly Manchester
- 110 [Alunna](#) (not *Alicuna*) = probably Castle Steads
- 111 [Camulodono](#) = probably Hawksclough hillfort near the Walton-le-Dale Roman site
- 112 [Caluuo](#) = plausibly Lancaster
- 113 [Galluuo](#) = a duplication of *Caluuo*, or conceivable [Warton Crag](#) near Morecambe Bay or
- 114 [Medibogdo](#) = almost certainly Watercrock, near Kendal
- 115 [Cantaventi](#) = same as *Clanoventa*, at the head of Windermere
- 116 [Iuliocanon](#) = almost certainly Hardknott

This all makes excellent sense on the map. The key reason for overruling our earlier guess, that *Cantaventi* was a separate site at the head of Morecambe Bay, is how well the likely translations of numbers 114 and 115 describe their physical situations. Accepting that the *Cosmography*'s order of listing is very reliable, then strongly pushes *Cantaventi* towards Ambleside, and raises a question why two ancient sources should begin the name with *Glano*- 'bank' and one with *Canta*- 'edge'. It also suggests that there was a triangle of Roman roads in the farmland north of Kendal. Were they ever engineered to Roman army standards and can they still be found?

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