

## *Leviodanum and Levioxava*

The Ravenna Cosmography contains this sequence of names:

... [Uguste](#) [Leviodanum](#) [Poreoclassis](#) [Levioxava](#) [Cermium](#) [Victorie](#) [Marcotaxon](#) ...

A general location near the river Tay seems highly likely because the Cosmography lists names in geographically logical sequences, as if its author was reading names off some long-lost Roman maps or itineraries, and here its names seem to be in eastern Scotland, trending generally southwards. Fitting these names to Roman places is like a game of musical chairs, because there seems to be one more name than there are significant Roman sites known in this area. Consequently this little article keeps getting revised. Suggestions welcome.

*Victorie* clearly refers to the battle of *Mons Graupius*, described by Tacitus, which appears to have been fought somewhere between Stirling and Perth, Scotland. Ptolemy called it a *πολις*, so it cannot be a mere battlefield. None of the observation towers and small forts on or near the Gask Ridge is on a proper river.

*Levio-* begins two of these names. Were they linked by both having a similar geographical feature? Or by geographical and cultural closeness? A discussion of [Lav- and Lev-](#) in ancient names now comes down firmly in favour of ‘lips’, i.e. a slot or slit river valley, and not ‘variable river’ or a parallel with levee ‘embankment’, as previously favoured.

[Leviodanum](#) was probably at [Bertha](#) Roman fort, in an angle of land where the river Almond flows into the Tay at NO097268 north of Perth. That name’s write-up now contains much topographical discussion that used to be here, but there remains a worry that maybe *Levio-* referred to the weir itself. Latin had two similar verbs [levo](#) ‘to elevate’ and [levo](#) ‘to smoothe’ (plus a potential confusion from [laevus](#) ‘left’) and of course a weir both elevates and smoothes water flow.

[Levioxava](#)’s write-up is also now more definite, having also absorbed text that used to be here. *Levioxava* should lie between [Poreoclassis](#) (‘forward base of the fleet’ at Carpow Roman fort) and *Cermium* (whose translation as ‘little slice’ cries out to claim the road cutting opposite Strageath Roman fort).

If the Romans did transport supplies by boat up to the big fort at Inchtutil, and to their other sites along the Gask Ridge, they would have needed to confront some rocky stretches of river. There are possible signs of ancient river engineering upstream on the Tay between Campsie Linn and Stanley, where there are now rapids and a modern weir. Such a site would surely not leave a memorable name, but it makes one wonder what to look for to fit *Levio-*.

It previously seemed likely that *Levioxava* was on or near the river Earn. For example, the Roman [camp](#) at Broomhill, NO03941753, near the river Earn, lies across the Water of May from Forteviot, but the name *Marcotaxon* has a strong claim on this site. Also it is hard to imagine a mere marching camp having a finely engineered weir and/or bridge, so *Levio-* would need to signify just an embankment against, or causeway across, the river Earn’s flood plain (of which there is no sign now). At Bridge of Earn a [canoeist](#) reports “a weir about 150m below the road bridge ... which washes out at high tide”. And Selkirk (1995) “would like to bet ... that Inchaffray Abbey hides a Roman site”. Also, at or about NO107194, there is a curious figure-8 structure in the river Earn, around Kirkton Pouch and an oxbow lake. The modern flood risk map shows that this is about the limit of potential flooding from an exceptionally high tide. Hypothetically, the Romans put some sort of weir or dam there to raise the upstream river level and permit boats to carry supplies to the fort at Strageath. If there is any merit in this idea some kind of Roman site remains to be discovered there, buried under the river’s flood plain.



Here is a map of the rivers Tay and Earn near Perth, taken from Google Maps terrain option. It shows possible 'lips' around the Tay.

And here is a map of the area, taken from the Gask Project website, but with the track of the Cosmography's sequence of names laid on top as a black line. The dogleg west towards Strageath and then back towards Forteviot is very worrying.



Last updated by Anthony Durham 25 June 2021. You may copy this text freely, provided you acknowledge its source as [www.romanenames.uk](http://www.romanenames.uk), recognise that it is liable to human error, and try to offer suggestions for improvement.