

Back to the Romans and “Vernemetum”

In 55-54 BC, Julius Caesar visited Britain and established trading and treaty relationships with native Celtic tribes, including the Coritani in this area. Nearly 100 years later, for various reasons, including treaty obligations, the Roman army invaded the Country in the summer of 43 AD, when Claudius was Emperor.

In time, the long Fosse Way was built from Lindinis (Ilchester) to Lindum (Lincoln), with extensions at either end, to the south coast near the mouth of the Axe and north to the Humber. It was one of the most major of main Roman roads. At a point one day's steady march north of Ratae Coritanorum, a rest station was constructed, called Vernemetum. Some scholars favour its site as close to and north east of Willoughby on the Wolds, which, as a settlement, probably didn't exist at the time.

The Station is mentioned twice in the Antonine Itinerary in descriptions of two routes: i). from Londino to Lindo (London to Lincoln); and ii). From Eburaco to Londinium (York to London). Both agree on its position between the regional capital, Ratae Coritanorum (Leicester), and the defended settlement of Margidunum (Castle Hill, near East Bridgford), but the spellings differ – “Vernemeto” and “Verometo”a.

Some academics suggest that Vernemetum is a Latinised version of a Celtic place name already in existence, hereabouts, viz. ‘Vernemeton’. The word “nemeton” is Celtic for ‘sacred grove’. The prefix ‘ver’ (with no ‘v’ in Welsh) might be derived from “fry” or “fyny” meaning above, aloft or upwards; or from “wher” = sky; or just from “yr” = the.

The Verometo spelling could be Antonine short-hand, which, in full, might be “Verno- nemeto”. The Latin verno or vernus means vernal or springtime. So, combined with the Celtic nemeton, this gives us “The Sacred Grove of Spring” – Vernemetum.