

ART. VI.—*An inscription from Beaumont, and cohorts
I Nervia Germanorum.** By ERIC BIRLEY, M.A.,
F.S.A.

THE western forts of Hadrian's Wall have yielded so few inscriptions assignable to a specific period, or mentioning a particular regiment, that the discovery which I have to record is particularly welcome. In September, 1934, the wall of a cottage in Beaumont was being pulled down, when one of its footing stones was turned over, and found to be the greater part of an altar. The base and part of the left side have been trimmed off, no doubt when it was incorporated in the wall, and redressing of the capital has removed the first line of the text; the surviving lettering is clear, though not very good, as will be seen in the photograph (see plate) on which my reading depends, and for which I have to thank our member Mr. T. Gray. The inscription has already been published by our President in the *Journal of Roman Studies*,† but it deserves further consideration; the text is as follows:

[I. O. M.]
[E]TNVMINIB
VSAVGGN
MAVR.RVM
5. AVR.VALER

* The following abbreviations are employed: AA⁴ = *Archaeologia Aeliana*, fourth series; CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*; CW² = these *Transactions*, new series; EE = *Ephemeris Epigraphica*; ILS = Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*; JRS = *Journal of Roman Studies*; RE = Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie*.

† XXV 223-4 and plate XLII.

IANIGALLIE
 NIQ CAEL
 VIBIANV
 S TRIBCOH
 10. P.N.SS.IST
 [A]NTEIVLR
 VFINOPRI
 NCIPE

The restoration of the first line is certain, in view of what follows; in l. 3, AVGGG, the abbreviation for three *Augusti*, is a mistake, since only two emperors are in question, while it is usual for the initial of *nostri* to be repeated as often as the preceding G: we should have expected AVGG. NN. In the next line, the stone-cutter has gone still further astray. He seems to have begun cutting M. AVR. VALERIANI, but only to have noticed that he had doubled the R after the initial of the next word had been cut; so he began again, without erasing what he had done wrong; we must neglect all but the last letter of this line, and read on from it. But we still have a blunder to correct; for Valerian and Gallienus were *P. Licinii*, not *M. Aurelii*. It is hard to say how so egregious an error can have come about; at the accession of Valerian and Gallienus, it was eighteen years since there had been an emperor whose names began in that way—M. Aurelius Severus Alexander, murdered in 235; we can only conclude that the stone was set up very soon after the accession, when the new emperors' full names could still be matters for surmise on a distant frontier of the Empire; that is to say, in the latter half of A.D. 253. In l. 7, we must read *Cael(ius)* rather than *C(aius) Ael(ius)*;^{*} by that time, *praenomina* had gone out of fashion on British inscriptions[†] except, as here, in the record of imperial names. The beginning of l. 10

^{*} JRS *cit.*

[†] Cf. CIL VII 107, 287, 646, 769, 820, 822-3, 949, &c.

is slightly inset—there does not appear to be a letter missing; it will be seen that the spacing is getting wilder towards the end of the inscription. The simplest expansion of the initials seems, in view of the evidence discussed below, to be *p(rimae) N(ervanae) s(upra)-s(criptorum)*; we have other evidence for the presence of *coh. I Nervana* (or *Nervia Germanorum* at Burgh, the neighbouring fort to which this altar should presumably be attributed, while SS, so expanded, is a space-saving abbreviation for the titles *Valeriana Galliena* with which we find regiments credited, in the manner customary from the time of Caracalla, during this reign. The use of stops is arbitrary, though no less arbitrary than the division of words; of the letters, the F in l.12 is the strangest. We may expand and translate the inscription as follows: [*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) e)t numinibus Aug(ustorum) n(ostrorum) M(arcorum) Aur(eliorum) Valeriani Gallieniq(ue), Cael(ius) Vibianus trib(unus) coh(ortis) p(rimae) N(ervanae) s(upra)s(criptorum), i(n)st[itu]nte Iul(io) Rufino principe*—“To Jupiter Best and Greatest, and to the Majesty of our emperors, Marcus Aurelius Valerianus and Marcus Aurelius Gallienus, Caelius Vibianus, tribune of their first Nervan cohort (set up this altar) through the agency of Julius Rufinus, senior centurion.”

It is interesting to find another instance of the *princeps* deputizing for the equestrian commander of the regiment—the number recorded in the whole empire is not very great*—but the main interest of the inscription undoubtedly lies in its record of the third-century garrison of Burgh. West of Birdoswald the list of regiments in the *Notitia Dignitatum* loses touch, as it has long been realized, with the third-century epigraphic

* Reference is made to the British examples in CW² XXXI 147; it is perhaps more likely that we should regard these men as senior centurions rather than decurions; cf. Cheesman, *Auxilia*, p. 37 with p. 38. The point requires fuller discussion than can be given to it here.

records that have hitherto tallied with its allocations; the next station, *Petrianæ*, with a milliary *ala* in garrison, could not be equated with Castlesteads even if that fort had not produced third-century records of *coh. II Tungrorum*, for the area of Castlesteads is too small;* but it might have been suggested that the list was correct, but for the misplacing of *Petrianæ*, as an index to the garrisons of the Wall in that century. Now we are in a better position to judge, particularly since the appearance of Mr. I. A. Richmond's convincing examination of the Rudge Cup and the Ravenna List has thrown fresh light on the *Notitia Dignitatum*:† for *Petrianæ* loses a place altogether in the list of forts *per lineam valli*,‡ and we get the remaining Wall-forts identified as *Uxellodunum* (Castlesteads), *Aballava* (Burgh) and *Maia* (Bowness), with Stanwix and Drumburgh, neither a large fort—indeed, neither even yet certainly a fort at all—omitted. In the light of these identifications, which seem well enough founded for us to adopt as a basis for further discussion, the confusion in the *Notitia* list becomes more marked, and so does its divergence from the situation in the third century. Castlesteads, as we have seen, was occupied by *coh. II Tungrorum*, in place of *coh. I Hispanorum* with which it is credited in that list; Burgh, we can now say, was the home of *coh. I Nervana Germanorum*, not of a *numerus Maurorum*;§ Bowness

* CW² XXXI 147.

† AA⁴ XII 334-342.

‡ The only available site left, in view of the considerations advanced by Mr. Richmond, together with the present writer's note in CW² XXXI 146-7, appears to be Carlisle itself, where part of a dedication by a prefect of the *ala* has been found (CIL VII 929). If the *ala*-fort stood alongside the town of *Luguwallium*, it becomes easier to understand its being called after the regiment in garrison, instead of by a proper place-name. It may be conjectured that the fort underlay the present Castle, where deep digging has in the past produced Roman material from time to time.

§ There was a *numerus Frisionum* at *Aballava* in the middle of the third century (recorded in the difficult inscriptions, CIL VII 415-6 and EE III p. 130, from Papcastle); no doubt it shared the fort with *I Nervana Germanorum*, in accordance with the practice also attested in the third century at many forts in the north of Britain.



THE BEAUMONT INSCRIPTION.

*By courtesy of the Society for the
Promotion of Roman Studies.*

To face p. 64.

does not appear in the list at all. Whatever the reason for the topographical confusion,* it seems certain that the list, in its present form, cannot be dated earlier than the Constantian re-organization of the northern frontier.

It seems desirable to add an account of the cohort that we have taken the new discovery to refer to, the more so since it has recently been made the subject of a misleading note. Its records are as follows:

(1) The British diploma for A.D. 122 (JRS XX 16-23): *I Nervia Germanor(um) milliaria*. The significance of the title is discussed below.

(2) Birrens (CIL VII 1066 with EE IX p. 614): *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) coh(ors) I Nervan(a) Germanor(um) milliaria) eq(uitata) cui praeest L(ucius) Faenius Felix trib(unus)*.

(3) Birrens (CIL VII 1063): *Fortunae coh(ors) I Nervana Germanor(um) milliaria) eq(uitata) v(otum) l(ibens) [s(olvit)]*.

(4) Beaumont (CIL VII 937): *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) coh(ors) [I] N[e]rvana Germanorum mil(liaria) eq(uitata) cui praeest P(ublius) [T]usc[ilie]n[us]† A[n]nianu[s] t[r]ib[un]un(us).‡*

(5) Netherby (CIL VII 953): *Deo sancto Cocidio Paternius Maternus tribunus coh(ortis) I Nervan(a)e ex evocato Palatino v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

(6) Beaumont: the present inscription.

All five inscriptions come from forts so close together that it might seem difficult to deduce whether the regiment

* Mr. Richmond suggests that the western garrisons may have been arranged in groups in accordance with regimental seniority; the commander of the *ala Petriana* would naturally be senior to the commanders of the infantry cohorts that follow it in the list.

† The restoration proposed by Hübner is obviously uncertain, but it is retained here for want of a better; when the stone turns up again it may be possible to improve upon it.

‡ In view of this inscription and the new discovery, we may probably restore the cohort's name in CIL VII 936, from Burgh, whose dedication shows that it belongs to the third century: *Herculi et numini Aug(usti) coh(ors) [I Nervana Germanorum, &c.]*.

changed its station once or more, or whether it merely distributed its dedications. But Nos. 2, 4 and 6 are all dedications of the type that regiments regularly set up in their place of garrison, no doubt on the occasion of renewing their vows of loyalty to the reigning emperor on the anniversary of his accession* or on the first of January;† the cohort must at one time have been stationed at Birrens. But the dedication from Netherby, while it might testify to a later change of garrison,‡ might equally well record a pilgrimage by the tribune whose personal tribute to Cocidius it is; it cannot be taken to prove that the cohort was stationed at Netherby.

It is unfortunate that the inscriptions from Birrens are not datable; the cohort was not there under Julius Verus, when *coh. II Tungrorum* was in possession of the fort,§ but we cannot say whether it was stationed there before or after that governorship.

Light is thrown on its early history by the title *Nervia* or *Nervana*. It has been suggested, indeed, that we should equate *I Nervia Germanorum* with the *coh. I Nerviorum* that appears only in the British diploma for 105 and on an inscription from Caergai in Merionethshire;|| but the suggestion, which we owe to the acumen of Dr. Ernst Stein,¶ has little to recommend it. The Nervii were not Germans, though like most Belgic tribes they could claim some German blood, and all ancient writers distinguish them plainly from the Germans**; and in any case there is a series of other regiments, similarly named—and towns, too, for that matter—that we are bound to connect with the emperor Nerva:

* Cf. Pliny *Letters* X, 52-3 and 102-3.

† Cf. Pliny *Letters* X, 35, 100-1; Tacitus *Histories* 1, 55; Domaszewski's view (*Die Religion des römischen Heeres*, p. 28) scarcely requires controverting.

‡ Cf. CW² XXXI 139; JRS XXII 58.

§ Cf. CW² XXXV 58; EE IX 1230, &c.

|| EE VII 863.

¶ In *Die kaiserlichen Beamten und Truppenkörper usw.*, p. 203 n. 304.

** e.g. Caesar *Bell. Gall.* VI 2; Pliny *Hist. Nat.* IV 106.

Regiments: (1) *ala I Augusta Nerviana fidelis* (Mauretania Caesariensis, diploma for A.D. 107; ILS 2003add.p.CLXXVI = CIL VIII 20978).

(2) *coh. I Augusta Nerviana velox* (*ibidem*, and perhaps also Dacia Porolissensis, diploma for 159; Hüttl, *Antoninus Pius* II (1933) p.207 = CIL III p.1990 dipl. LXX with Premierstein, *Wiener Eranos* 1909, 257 f.).

(3) *coh. II Augusta Nervia pacensis milliaria Brittonum* (Pannonia Inferior, diploma for 114; CIL III dipl. XXXIX).

Towns: (1) *colonia Ner(via) Glevensis* (Gloucester; ILS 2365*).

(2) *colonia Nerviana Augusta Martia veteranorum Sitifensis* (Sitifis in Mauretania Caesariensis; ILS 557).

The nature of the connection of Glevum and Sitifis with Nerva is not open to question; they owed to him their foundation as colonies;† but in the case of the auxiliary regiments there are two possible explanations of the title: it may denote either the period when they were first raised, or the award of battle honours (as we should put it) by Nerva. In the case of *coh. I Nervia Germanorum* the first explanation is all the more likely because the second so clearly applies to the other regiments, with their additional honorific titles—particularly as the first two have dropped whatever tribal names they may previously have had (we may compare the *ala Augusta ob virtutem appellata* at Old Carlisle);‡ but even the latter, although they occur in

* Cf. AA⁴ XII 214 n. 39.

† For Sitifis cf. Kornemann in RE IV col. 560; on Glevum, col. 545, he goes astray, but cf. Hübner in RE VII col. 1424.

‡ Cf. CW² XXXI 146.

diplomas of 107 or 114, well within twenty-five years of his accession, might still have been raised by Nerva. Though a regiment would discharge the first of its original recruits twenty-five years after its foundation, it would have for discharge at earlier dates the experienced soldiers drafted into it at its foundation, as in the case of the *cohors Usiporum* in the time of Agricola, *ad tradendam disciplinam inmixti manipulis*.*

We may conclude, then, that the cohort was raised in 96 or 97; it therefore represents an addition to the army of Britain after the recall of Agricola, whether it was transferred to the island immediately after its foundation (perhaps the likeliest event), or with the reinforcements that were needed in the last years of Trajan's principate and the early years of Hadrian.

* Tacitus *Agricola* 28, 2.