

ART. VIII. – *Two Altars of cohorts IV Gallorum from Castlesteads.*

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TWO altars from the Roman fort at Castlesteads attest the presence there of the Fourth Cohort of Gauls (*cohors IV Gallorum*). This unit was one of a series of five cohorts raised in Gaul, which presumably formed part of the Claudian invasion force in 43. It was a part-mounted quingenary cohort (a *cohors quingenaria equitata*) with a nominal strength of 480 foot and 120 cavalry.

The first altar, *RIB* 1979, was found in the bed of the beck at the foot of Kileyske Hill, about 0·8 km to the west of the fort.¹ It reads:

I(OVI) O(PTIMO) M(AXIMO)|COH(ORS) IIII GAL|LORVM EQ(VITATA)|CVI
PR[AE(E)]S[T] | CA[.]S[.] . . . | IR[.] . . .

‘To Jupiter, Best and Greatest, the Fourth Cohort of Gauls, part mounted, (set this up) under the command of Ca.s. . . .’

The final two lines are virtually illegible, but comprised the name and title of the commander of the unit. Collingwood² restored CAESOI[. . .] | [P]R[A]EF[. . .] | , ‘Caseonius . . . prefect’, although *RIB* is more cautious in its restoration.

The second altar, *RIB* 1980, was found in the fort.³ It reads:

I(OVI) O(PTIMO) M(AXIMO)|COH(ORS) IIII|GALLORVM|C(VI) P(RAEEST)
VOLCACI | VS HOSPES | PR(A)EF(ECTVS) EQ(VITVM)

‘To Jupiter, Best and Greatest, the Fourth Cohort of Gauls (set this up) under the command of Volcacius Hospes, prefect of cavalry.’

There is no direct evidence for the date of these altars. Collingwood dated them on stylistic grounds to the second century, and specifically to the period 121/2-181.⁴ Other commentators have favoured a Hadrianic date,⁵ or one under Antoninus Pius.⁶ The only dating evidence is provided by the movements of the dedicating unit, and by the style of the inscriptions.

Cohors IV Gallorum appears in diplomas of 122 and 146 (*CIL* xvi 69, 93), but the earliest evidence for its base is provided by two undated tombstones from Templeborough. Templeborough was first occupied by a timber fort, which was probably abandoned in the late-first century. The fort was rebuilt in stone in the early-second century, and evacuated during the second half of that century, perhaps *c.* 175.⁷ Both stones were found re-used in drains,⁸ so that they must have been cut before *c.* 175. Indeed, they are unlikely to be any later than the reign of Trajan, since the formula *Dis Manibus* (‘to the spirits of the departed’) is given in full on one (*RIB* 620), and is abbreviated *Dis M.* on the other (*RIB* 619). These stones were either relics of the timber fort re-used by the builders of the first stone fort, or were early-second century stones re-used by the builders of Templeborough III. They could be Domitianic. On the other hand, the presence of tiles stamped by the unit⁹ shows that they probably date from the early-second century, for there is no evidence for tile-stamping in the Flavian period.¹⁰ The chances are that *IV Gallorum* was the first – Trajanic – garrison at Templeborough II.

The unit is next recorded at Castlehill (*RIB* 2195). This was probably in Antonine I, c. 140-158, when a vexillation may have been out-stationed at Bearsden.¹¹ Some time after c. 158, it was transferred to Risingham, where it is recorded on two undated inscriptions (*RIB* 1227, 1249). One inscription (1227) is a dedication to the *Numinib(us) Augustor(um)*, on which *Augustorum* is not abbreviated. Such dedications were comparatively common in Britain,¹² but only five of these dedications carry the abbreviation *Augg*.¹³ Of these, three can be closely dated: to 208 (*RIB* 627), 244 (*RIB* 327), and 253-258 (*RIB* 2042). These suggest that *Augustorum* would have been abbreviated on inscriptions dating from or after the joint reign of Severus and Caracalla (198-211). Thus *RIB* 1127 may well date from an earlier joint reign: either that of Marcus and Lucius (161-169), or Marcus and Commodus (176-180).¹⁴ This would imply that *IV Gallorum* moved to Risingham after c. 158, but probably before 180.¹⁵ It had left Risingham by 205-207 (*RIB* 1234), and was at Chesterholm by 213 (*RIB* 1705). It was still there when the *Notitia* sub-section *per lineam valli* was compiled (*Occ.*, 40. 41).

The unit's movements can be summarised as: Trajanic period – Templeborough; Antonine I – Castlehill; later-second century – Risingham; early-third to fourth centuries – Chesterholm. This could suggest that *IV Gallorum* was at Castlesteads in the Hadrianic period, or alternatively in Antonine II.

Collingwood and succeeding commentators have all dated the Castlesteads altars to the second century. In fact the style of the lettering on both altars would be more appropriate to the third century. Moreover, on *RIB* 1980, *cui praeest* ('under the command') is abbreviated *c.p.* This phrase appears on 60 British inscriptions,¹⁶ but on only 13 of these is it abbreviated *c.p.*¹⁷ Of these, at least 11 are third century: 9 can be assigned a general third century date,¹⁸ one to the period 235-238 (*RIB* 1896), and one to 276-282.¹⁹ The remaining two inscriptions comprise an altar from Maryport (*RIB* 821), which is probably also third century,²⁰ and *RIB* 1980 from Castlesteads. These inscriptions suggest that the abbreviation *c.p.* only became current in the third century.²¹ It follows that *RIB* 1980 is unlikely to be second century, let alone as early as the Hadrianic period. It is probably third century; and if this altar is third century, then so too is *RIB* 1979. Hence *IV Gallorum* probably garrisoned Castlesteads for part of the third century.

Little is known about the successive garrisons at Castlesteads. The only certainly attested units are *IV Gallorum* and *II Tungrorum mill. eq. c.L.*²² The latter unit is attested by four inscriptions,²³ one of which dates to 241 (*RIB* 1983). It is not subsequently recorded, for although Castlesteads was probably the *Camboglanna* of the *Notitia*,²⁴ its garrison has failed to survive in that document.²⁵

There are at least two periods in the third century during which *IV Gallorum* could have garrisoned Castlesteads. The unit had left Risingham by 205-207 (*RIB* 1234) – and could have left appreciably earlier than this – but is not attested at Chesterholm until 213 (*RIB* 1705). It could have been stationed at Castlesteads between these periods. A third century Severan date would suit both the lettering of the inscriptions and the use of the abbreviation *c.p.* on *RIB* 1980. This is the simplest explanation. Alternatively, *IV Gallorum* is attested at Chesterholm in 223, 276-282, and in the *Notitia*.²⁶ The archaeological evidence suggests that the *vicus* at Chesterholm – and presumably, therefore, the fort – were abandoned for part of the third century, perhaps from c. 245-270.²⁷ The numismatic evidence suggests, on the other hand, that Castlesteads may not

have been occupied during coin period XIII (259-270).²⁸ If this is correct, and if Chesterholm was abandoned c. 245-270, *IV Gallorum* could have garrisoned Castlesteads around the middle of the third century – perhaps within the period c. 245-259.

Notes and References

- ¹ J. C. Bruce, *The Roman Wall*, ed. 3 (London, 1867), 285.
- ² R. G. Collingwood, 'Castlesteads', *CW2*, xxii, 207.
- ³ A. Gordon, *Itinerarium Septentrionale* (London, 1726), 97; J. Horsley, *Britannia Romana* (London, 1732), 260.
- ⁴ *Loc. cit.*, 202-3.
- ⁵ P. A. Holder, *The Roman Army in Britain* (London, 1982), 117.
- ⁶ D. J. Breeze and B. Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall* (London, 1976), 254.
- ⁷ G. Simpson, 'Roman Manchester and Templeborough: The Forts and Dates Reviewed', *Greeks, Celts and Romans*, C. Hawkes and S. Hawkes (eds.), (London, 1973), 88-9.
- ⁸ T. May, *The Roman Forts of Templebrough, Near Rotherham* (Rotherham, 1922), 28, 127, 129.
- ⁹ T. May, *loc. cit.*, 122-3.
- ¹⁰ M. Hassall, 'Military Tile-Stamps from Britain', *Roman Brick and Tile*, A. McWhirr (ed.), B.A.R. S68, (Oxford, 1979), 261-6.
- ¹¹ W. S. Hanson and G. S. Maxwell, *Rome's North West Frontier: The Antonine Wall* (Edinburgh, 1983), 154, 156, 166; D. J. Breeze, 'The Roman Fort on the Antonine Wall at Bearsden', *Roman Scotland: Some Recent Excavations*, D. J. Breeze (ed.), (Edinburgh, 1979), 23.
- ¹² See the indexes to *RIB* (Gloucester, 1983), to which can be added: *JRS*, 47 (1957), 230.19; 53 (1963), 161.7; 55 (1965), 221.3; 59 (1969), 235.1; *Britannia*, 8 (1977), 429.16, 430.18.
- ¹³ *RIB* 327, 459, 627, 918, 2042.
- ¹⁴ D. J. Breeze and B. Dobson, *op. cit.* (note 6), 248, 254.
- ¹⁵ It will have been around this period that vexillations of *IV Gallorum* and *II Nerviorum* were engaged in building at High Rochester (*Britannia*, 14 (1983), 337.12). The date must be later than 139-143 (*RIB* 1276), when High Rochester appears to have been reoccupied, and thus later than c. 140-158, when *IV Gallorum* was at Castlehill, but is unlikely to be as late as 213, by which date *II Nerviorum* had been transferred to Whitley Castle (*RIB* 1202).
- ¹⁶ *RIB* lists 57 instances, to which can be added: *JRS*, 51 (1961), 192.4, 194.12; *Britannia*, 1 (1970), 310.20.
- ¹⁷ *RIB* 797, 821, 1877-1878, 1882-1884, 1886-1887, 1891, 1896, 1980; *JRS*, 51 (1961), 194.12. All but three of these are from Birdoswald: 797 (Moresby), 821 (Maryport), 1980 (Castlesteads). Two further dedications, again from Birdoswald, use the formula *c. praeest* (*RIB* 1875, 1893).
- ¹⁸ *RIB* 1877-1878, 1882-1884, 1886-1887 – i.e. when *cohors I Aelia Dacorum* was the garrison at Birdoswald (*RIB* 1909 (205-208); *JRS*, 51 (1961), 194.12 (276-282); *Not. Dig. Occ.*, 40.44) – and *RIB* 797, when *cohors II Thracum eq.* was at Moresby (*RIB* 803, 804; *Not. Dig. Occ.*, 40.50 – *cohors secundae Thracum, Gabrosenti*: A. L. F. Rivet and C. Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London, 1979), 364-5.
- ¹⁹ *JRS*, 51 (1961), 194.12. The two *c. praeest* dedications (note 17) can be dated to 237 (*RIB* 1875), and 238-44 (*RIB* 1893).
- ²⁰ *RIB* restores COH(ORS) [I HISP(ANORUM)] EQ(UITATA). There is, however, no warrant for this. The unit commemorated was an unknown *cohors quingenaria equitata* which garrisoned Maryport either in the late-second century, or, more probably, in the third century (cf. M. G. Jarrett, 'Roman Officers at Maryport', *CW2*, lxxv, 129-30; M. G. Jarrett, 'The Garrisons of Maryport and the Roman Army in Britain', *Britain and Rome*, M. G. Jarrett and B. Dobson (eds.), (Kendal, 1966), 40; M. G. Jarrett, *Maryport, Cumbria: a Roman Fort and its Garrison* (Kendal, 1976), 25).
- ²¹ The Birdoswald inscriptions led Professor Eric Birley to draw the same conclusion nearly 40 years ago, and it was on this basis that he assigned *RIB* 797 (=EE vii 967) to the third century ('The Roman Fort at Moresby', *CW2*, xlvi, 55-6). It does not follow that *cui praeest* was always abbreviated in the third century. There are at least 18 examples from that century where the phrase was inscribed in full: *RIB* 723, 897, 1231, 1536, 1580, 1584-1586, 1688, 1879, 1881, 1888-1890, 1914, 1981-1983. Of these, 1983 dates from 241, and 897 from 238-44.
- ²² Castlesteads was too small to have housed a *cohors milliaria equitata* at full strength, even if – as seems

quite possible – Richmond and Hodgson were incorrect in suggesting that it occupied only c. 1.5 ha ('Excavations at Castlesteads', CW2, xxxiv, 163). This and the fact that the unit's altars were set up *instante* NAME *principe*, led Professor Eric Birley to suggest that only part of the unit, commanded by the *princeps*, was at Castlesteads ('Three Notes on Roman Cumberland', CW2, xxxi, 147; 'A Note on the Second Cohort of Tungrians', CW2, xxxv, 56). This may well be correct (cf. M. P. Speidel, '*Princeps* as a Title for *ad hoc* Commanders', *Britannia*, 12 (1981), 11-12), although the problem is not confined to Castlesteads (E. Birley, 'An Introduction to the Excavation of Chesterholm-Vindolanda', *AA* 4, 8 (1931), 192; D. Breeze and B. Dobson, 'Fort Types on Hadrian's Wall', *AA* 4, 47 (1969), 25, 27).

²³ *RIB* 1981-1983, 1999.

²⁴ M. W. C. Hassall, 'Britain in the Notitia', *Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum*, R. Goodburn and P. Bartholomew (eds.), B.A.R. S15, (Oxford, 1976), 113; A. L. F. Rivet and C. Smith, *op. cit.* (note 18), 293-4.

²⁵ Hassall (*op. cit.* (note 24)) restores *cohortis secundae Tungrorum*, *Camboglanna*, but this is only a plausible guess.

²⁶ *RIB* 1706, 1710; *Occ.*, 40.41.

²⁷ R. Birley, *Vindolanda* (London, 1977), 70-2. A hoard of 111 radiate coins has been found in the *vicus*. The hoard terminates with issues of Postumus and Victorinus, and will therefore have been deposited by 270 (R. Birley, *op. cit.*, 32; J. C. Bruce and C. M. Daniels, *Handbook to the Roman Wall*, ed. 13 (Newcastle, 1978), 159). It could suggest abandonment after 270 (C. Daniels, *Britannia*, 10 (1979), 363) – presumably after 276-282 (*RIB* 1710), and ending in the early-fourth century, when the fort was rebuilt (J. C. Bruce and C. M. Daniels, *op. cit.*, 158; *Britannia*, 12 (1981), 323). The occupational phases at Chesterholm will be uncertain until reports on the excavations in the fort and *vicus* have been published. The site could have been abandoned c. 245-270, or within the period c. 276/82-306. We have chosen to follow the earlier date because there is evidence for intramural demolition before c. 270, and for rebuilding after c. 270 (*Britannia*, 12 (1981), 323). Chesterholm has also produced at least four coins of Carausius and Allectus (N. Shiel, 'Carausian and Allectan Coin Evidence from the Northern Frontier', *AA* 5, 5 (1977), 78). Thus the *vicus* hoard need not be indicative of abandonment, so that, for the present, there is no clear *published* evidence for abandonment in the last quarter of the third century.

²⁸ D. C. A. Shotter, 'The Evidence of Coin-Loss and the Roman Occupation of North West England', *The Changing Past: Some Recent Work in the Archaeology of Northern England*, N. J. Higham (ed.), (Manchester, 1979), 3, 11.