

The *Civitas* Stones and the Building of Hadrian's Wall

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The date of the *civitas* stones from Hadrian's Wall is reviewed and the evidence for the date of completion of the Stone Wall and the extent of the rebuilding of the Turf Wall under Hadrian reconsidered. Emphasis is placed on the lack of evidence for the date of the rebuilding in stone of most of the Turf Wall and for how much of Hadrian's Wall was completed by the time Hadrian died. A second century date for the *civitas* stones, it is argued, is unlikely.

SEVERAL stones found on Hadrian's Wall record activity by the *civitates*, that is the cities, of Britain. The stones are all undated and dates ranging from Hadrian to the late fourth century have been proposed for them. The purpose of this paper is to review the evidence and consider their date together with the implications of the possible dates. The stones are all published in *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain (RIB)*. This publication, however, does not normally record the thickness of stones bearing inscriptions. Where possible I have checked the thickness of each stone and, when the stone is lost or inaccessible, provided a description based upon woodcuts or drawings. Measurements are listed in the following order: length x height x thickness.

Catalogue

RIB 1672 (found in 1882 at the foot of the crags north of Cawfields, that is about MC 42): *c(ivitas) Dur(o)tr(i)g(um) | [L]endin(i)e(n)sis*: the city of the Durotriges of Lendinae (built this): Lindinis can be identified with the Roman town of Ilchester. Shape: rectangular block measuring 343 x 254 x c.225mm.

RIB 1673 (found before 1873 somewhere west of Housesteads): *ci(vitas) Durotrag(um) Lendi|nie(n)si[s]*: the city of the Durotriges of Lendinae (built this). The inscription has been cut on the back of an altar. Shape: roughly rectangular block measuring 483 x 254 x 135mm.

RIB 1843 (found in or before 1760 near Carvoran, that is about MC 46): *civitas | Dum(no)ni(orum)*: the city of the Dumnonii (built this). Shape: rectangular block measuring 356 x 203 x c.216mm.

RIB 1844 (found before 1828 in the sector MC 46 to T 46a): *civitas | Dumnoni(orum)*: The city of the Dumnonii (built this). Shape: the drawing in *RIB* suggests that it is a roughly rectangular block measuring 280 x 180mm. It is now built into Holmhead and not available for inspection.

RIB 1962 (found in or before 1717 at Howgill east of MC 55, now built into a barn at Howgill Farm): *civitate Cat|uvellaun|orum Toss|[o]dio*: From the city of the Catuvellauni, Tossodio (built this). Shape: rectangular block measuring 460 x 254mm.

The thickness is not known but the drawing by Horsley suggests a thin stone no more than 25mm thick on the one side shown.¹

RIB 2022 (found before 1794 at Bleatarn, that is about MC 60; now lost): *capud p[er] [d(atura)] | civitat(is) | Brig<ig>*: The beginning of the length of feet built by the city of the Brigantes. No drawing of this stone appears to survive.

A further stone has been claimed as a *civitas* stone:

RIB 3376 was found at Cawfields (MC 42) in 1958, having been re-used in a medieval kiln beside the Vallum. It reads: [...] R(or S)ΛC | [...]SIS. It measures 325 x 200 x 60mm. R. S. O. Tomlin has restored the inscription to read [*c(civitas) Durot(rac(um) [Lendine](n)sis*, the city of the Durotraces of Lendin (...) (built this). The other two stones of the Lendinenses were found in the same area which adds plausibility to the restoration. The stone, however, is only 60 mm thick and in that way is similar to the thin slabs of the style favoured by the soldiers building the Vallum which vary in thickness from 37 to 75mm rather than the *civitas* stones which are generally rectangular blocks.² The single exception is *RIB 1962* recording work by the *civitas Catuvellaunorum* which appears to be a thin slab. This lends support to Tomlin's interpretation. It should be emphasised, however, that only the last three letters of each word survive on the stone and [...] *SIS* is not an uncommon ending, while the Vallum stones recorded in the region of Wall mile 7 bear very simple inscriptions such as the Cawfields inscription appears to be. Nick Hodgson has suggested to me that if the *RIB* reading is accepted, the stone could be evidence for civilians not only helping in the repair of the Wall but also the Vallum. In view of the fragmentary nature of the inscription, it would be better to place this stone to one side in this discussion.

The word *pedatura* only occurs on one of the above *civitas* stones, now unfortunately lost. It appears on other stones from the Wall. These are:

RIB 1629 (found near Housesteads): *[pe]datura [...]uci*. Shape: rectangular block measuring 406 x 330 x c.110-120mm.

RIB 1944 (first recorded at Triermain Castle north of MC 51 and now lost): *ped(atura) | cl(assis) Brit(annicae)*.

RIB 1945 (probably found near Birdoswald): *ped(atura) cla(ssis) | Bri(tannicae)*. Shape: rectangular block measuring 235-260 x 144 x 165-188mm. Tim Padley kindly reports (*pers. com.*) that 'comparing it to the engraving in *The Roman Wall* I think the engraving is inaccurate in that the curved area above the inscription goes into the stone, rather than being upright. The 'moulding' on the side of the stone is not as regular and pronounced. I therefore don't think it is a re-used part of an altar. However, the curved area in the centre of the front face above the lettering is regular and so it may have been re-used'.³

RIB 2053 (found at Drumburgh): *pedatura Vindo moruci*: the length in feet built by Vindomorus. Shape: a rectangular block measuring 445 x 330 x 143mm.

The role of military and civilian builders

Fulford referred to the civilians of the *civitates* as forming part of *corvées*, that is, pressed men.⁴ I can see no evidence for this; the inscriptions are mute on the nature of the builders. In general, the soldiers themselves undertook the building of military installations – which we all agree Hadrian's Wall was – and there is plentiful evidence for this throughout the empire.⁵ Indeed, I know of no epigraphic evidence, apart from the *civitas* stones, for civilians working on a military project. There is, it may be noted, evidence for the reverse, as instanced by the inscription recording the action of the former legionary surveyor Nonius Datus at the city of Saldae in North Africa (*CIL* VIII 2728 = *ILS* 5795).⁶ Mark Hassall, however, has drawn attention to a law dating to 441 which revoked earlier exemptions from certain services and stated that all should share in the repair of the military roads, the manufacture of arms, the rebuilding of fortifications, the production of military supplies and other tasks necessary for the defense of the empire.⁷ The clear implication is that such activities had been undertaken in the past by civilians, and it is likely that the reference to the rebuilding of fortifications refers to city defenses rather than the frontiers. In that case, the fifth century law is of little help in relation to the *civitas* stones on Hadrian's Wall.

It is the unique nature of these inscriptions from Hadrian's Wall which makes them so difficult to interpret. It remains possible that the civilians were labourers whose services were requisitioned by the state in the manner which operated for other activities in the Roman world, but they also could have been paid for their services.

The date of the inscriptions

The *civitas* stones, with but one possible exception, are rectangular blocks; the single exception appears to be a thin slab. None of the stones are dated. The relatively poor standard of the lettering precludes any date being suggested on stylistic grounds. The lettering is better cut than the inscriptions on centurial and cohort stones dating to the original construction of the Wall which are basic building stones usually with a tail to aid bonding and with the simple inscriptions scratched on the external face as opposed to the *civitas* stones, none of which are known to have had tails. Most *civitas* stones are different from those recording the construction of the Vallum under Hadrian which are thin slabs. The distinction between the *civitas* stones and the centurial, cohort and Vallum stones might be thought to suggest that the former are of a different date from the latter, but this cannot be proved. The closest parallels on Hadrian's Wall to the *civitas* stones so far as shape is concerned are those building stones which are generally dated to the later second century which are rectangular blocks without tails.⁸

The dates proposed so far range from 'the initial construction of the stone Wall' through the third century to the late fourth century.⁹ Fulford has argued that the stones using the word *pedatura* relate to the same building programme as the *civitas* inscriptions, but we cannot be certain about that and therefore I am not going to discuss these inscriptions which in any case provide no additional diagnostic information apart from the reference to the British fleet. Fulford has also stated that 'there is nothing inherently "late" in the character of any of the inscriptions' and suggested that there

is 'no reason not to propose that all the named *civitates* are associated with the initial construction of the Stone Wall and the replacement of the Turf Wall in stone, and that they belong to the second century, before the division of Britain into *Inferior* and *Superior*'.¹⁰ Birley separated out the stones, suggesting that the *civitas* stones were Severan in date, while 'the lettering on this [Vindomorucus] stone could perhaps better suit a fourth century date'.¹¹ The British fleet, we may note, is last recorded in the mid third century.¹² John Mann argued that the people from the cities of southern Britain are only likely to have worked in the north when both parts of the island lay within the same administrative unit (*pers. com.*). This was during the second century, before the division of the single province into two by the Emperor Septimius Severus or his son Caracalla, and the fourth century when Britain was again reunited into a diocese. The appearance of the Lendinenses on two, possibly three, stones does not help as these references to this civil body are unique and accordingly cannot be dated.¹³ I shall take each period in turn and examine the relevant evidence.

Hadrianic

A date under Hadrian seems inherently unlikely for four reasons. Firstly, one *civitas* inscription, *RIB* 1673, found to the west of Housesteads, was cut on a re-used altar. Secondly, the *civitas* stones are not of the same style as the Hadrianic centurial and cohort stones, nor the Vallum building stones. Thirdly, two of the *civitas* stones have been found on that sector of the Turf Wall which is believed to have been rebuilt in stone in the second half of the second century on the return from the Antonine Wall.¹⁴ Fourthly, the high involvement of the army in the building of Hadrian's Wall as evidenced by many inscriptions renders it unlikely that civilians would be involved at this time.¹⁵

The first two points require no further discussion. They are, however, relevant to the fourth point. As we have seen, Fulford has argued for a second century date suggesting that the plethora of military building stones commemorating the construction of the Wall, and the lack of later such inscriptions, support the case for a second century date. It might be thought, however, that this argument would support an even later date for the *civitas* stones, when there is less evidence for military building activity, more strongly than an earlier occasion. In any case, as we have seen, the fact that the *civitas* stones are not of the same shape and style as the centurial and cohorts stones and the cutting of one inscription on a re-used altar renders a Hadrianic date highly unlikely.

The third point may require some qualification. It is believed that the turf sector of Hadrian's Wall, running from the crossing of the River Irthing to Bowness-on-Solway, was rebuilt in two stages. The most easterly five miles are considered to have been rebuilt under Hadrian with the rest being replaced in stone in the second half of the second century. The two most westerly *civitas* inscriptions were found in that sector rebuilt later in the second century. A re-examination of the evidence for the rebuilding of the Turf Wall in stone, however, reveals discrepancies.

The section rebuilt under Hadrian is believed to be that from the River Irthing at

Harrow's Scar (MC 49) westwards to MC 54 (Randylands). But in reality MC 54 is merely the most westerly structure investigated by Simpson and Richmond in the 1930s where sufficient dating evidence survived for a conclusion to be reached.¹⁶ The next structure to the west, T 54a (Garthside), had a complicated history and should be taken out of consideration, while the other turrets westwards thence to T 57a (Beck) were merely identified without their interiors being examined. At that point, Simpson and Richmond considered that they had fulfilled their brief to investigate the eastern sector of the Turf Wall and they directed their attentions to the western end of the Turf Wall.¹⁷ The situation remains that we are unable to date the rebuilding of the Turf Wall in stone between MC 54 (Randylands) and MC 79 (Solway House).

The other diagnostic feature for the junction between the two periods of rebuilding of the Turf Wall is the change in the width and nature of the rebuilt Stone Wall from Narrow Wall to Intermediate Wall. 'Intermediate Wall' was the name given to the Stone Wall in the western sector of the Turf Wall which was 'thicker than the Narrow Wall of 7 feet 6 inches [2.286m] and thinner than the Broad Wall of 9 feet 6 inches [2.896m]'.¹⁸ The Broad Wall is not found west of the River Irthing, but the Narrow Wall occurs both east of the river and to the west where it has been recorded in the most easterly sector of the Turf Wall. Simpson and Richmond argued that the change from the Narrow Wall to the Intermediate Wall occurred at MC 53 (Banks Burn) on the basis of the change in the width of the flag footing at this location, the significance of this point no doubt influenced by their view of the importance of the Red Rock Fault, lying between T 53b (Craggle Hill) and MC 54 (Randylands), west of which was found only 'inferior red sandstone' to use in the construction of the Wall.¹⁹ The two forms of evidence therefore fortunately coincided.

These conclusions, however, were based on very little evidence.²⁰ We only have 30 records of the width of the foundations of the Stone Wall from the River Irthing to Bowness-on-Solway – that is an average of one per mile, though there are many miles where we have no record – and fewer measurements for the wall itself. Where the replacement Stone Wall survives more than a course or two high, that is in Wall miles 49-52, 66 and 72, it has no offsets.²¹ This is unlike both the Broad Wall and the

TABLE 1. Width of foundations and stone wall from MC 49 to MC 80
Based on P. R. Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall*, BAR BS 375, Oxford, 2004, together with Hodgson and McKelvey 2006 (n. 22). The number of known measurements in each sector is given in brackets.

Wall <i>mile</i>	Foundations			Curtain Wall				
	<i>Roman ft</i>	<i>imp ft</i>	<i>metres</i>	<i>Roman ft</i>	<i>imp ft</i>	<i>metres</i>		
49-51	9.01	8'9"	2.667	(3)	7.81-7.94	7'7"-7'9"	2.311-2.350	(7)
51-53	no evidence			7.72-8.28	7'6"-7'11"	2.286-2.450	(8)	
53	8.84-9.27	8'7"-9'	2.616-2.743	(3)	no evidence			
53-53a	9.70	9'5"	2.880	(1)	7.81	7'7"	2.320	(1)
54-57	9.53-9.95	9'3"-9'8"	2.819-2.946	(6)	no evidence			
57-64	no evidence			no evidence				
65	10.81	10'6"	3.200	(1)	no evidence			
65-79	8.61-9.95	8'4"-9'8"	2.550-2.946	(16)	7.72-8.41	7'6"-8'2"	2.286-2.489	(6)

Narrow Wall, on both of which there are offsets. The main significance of Table 1 is to show that there is a variation of 396mm (1ft 4in), that is 14%, in the width of the foundations and of 200mm (8in), nearly 10%, in the wall west of the River Irthing.

Simpson and Richmond appear to have based their definition of the Intermediate Wall primarily on the width of the foundations as there was so little known about the superstructure in 1934. This was a dangerous position because the variation in the width of the foundation may bear little relevance to the width of the Wall as recent work has demonstrated at Hare Hill. Here, the foundations are 130mm wider than a little to the east though the Stone Wall surmounting them is the same width.²²

It is clear that our beliefs about the western boundary of the section of Turf Wall rebuilt under Hadrian and the easterly point of the Intermediate Wall are based upon insufficient evidence and are indeed not known. In point of fact, in the main they merely relate to where Simpson and Richmond stopped investigating this section of the Turf Wall in 1935. At the end of each season of work they reviewed the state of knowledge and amended their position accordingly. In 1935 they decided that they had answered the basic questions and their interpretation thereafter remained at the point they had reached in 1935. To complicate matters, there is a discrepancy between the two forms of evidence they used to reach their conclusions. The date of the pottery from the structures suggested to Simpson and Richmond that MC 54 (Randylands) was the most westerly point of the Turf Wall rebuilt under Hadrian, whereas the structural evidence from the Wall led them to place the critical juncture for the foundations at MC 53 (Banks Burn); as we have noted, we now know that the superimposed Narrow Wall continued to at least a little further west than MC 53 (Banks Burn). It can be firmly stated that it is not possible to place a western limit on the rebuilding of the Turf Wall in stone under Hadrian from the point of view of the structures nor from the evidence of the wall itself as so little of it has survived anywhere. Indeed, nothing is known about the nature of its foundations in the three miles or so between MC 54 (Drawdykes) and T 57a (Beck). Accordingly, it is possible that the western boundary of the sector rebuilt under Hadrian lay further west than hitherto supposed. The discovery of *RIB* 1962 and 2022 within the six miles or so west of the presumed western end of the Hadrianic rebuilt sector where so little of the Wall is known, allows a degree of dubiety as to whether these inscriptions relate to the late Hadrianic rebuild of the Turf Wall or the later second century rebuild.

Second half of the second century

While the evidence for the Roman army working on Hadrian's Wall at this time is not as plentiful as under Hadrian, there are at least ten building stones which are dated to the second half of the second century or are believed to date to these years.²³ These include: the inscriptions of the Sixth legion from Wall mile 7, one dating to 158, three found in the neighbourhood of Denton (Wall mile 7) and four at Benwell fort in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, all recording work by the Second legion; a stone of the Sixth legion found at T 33b (Coesike); and one from Glasson near MC 78 (Kirkland) again of the Second legion.²⁴ It has hitherto been assumed that they all relate to the repair of Hadrian's Wall following a period of abandonment when the

frontier lay on the Antonine Wall. John Mann went so far as to suggest that 'after the advance into Scotland under Pius, it would appear that much of the Wall in the sector from Benwell to the west was demolished, and that extensive rebuilding was required at the time of the re-occupation of Hadrian's Wall as a frontier line in AD 158'.²⁵

We assume that the whole of the Hadrian's Wall was completed under Hadrian. Yet, there is evidence that this was not the case. Excavations by Tony Wilmott at Birdoswald revealed that the fort's ditches were not dug until after the return from the Antonine Wall while the granaries were not erected for another 40 years.²⁶ Inscriptions from the forts at Stanwix, Great Chesters and Vindolanda refer to work in the 160s.²⁷ It is usually assumed that these relate to repairs, but we cannot be certain that they do not relate to the completion of work suspended 20 years before.

An incomplete fort should be distinguished from an incomplete linear barrier and it would be difficult to demonstrate any section of the Wall itself that was unfinished when Hadrian died in 138.²⁸ We have already noted that the Antonine building stones are believed to record repairs to the Wall after a period of abandonment. But it is possible that they relate to the task of completing the work of building the Wall halted 20 years before when Hadrian's Wall was abandoned for the Antonine Wall. In that case, the word *perfecit* on one lost inscription may be taken as indicating the completion of work abandoned earlier. A desire to complete the task of building Hadrian's Wall in the years following the return from the Antonine Wall *could* account for the appearance of the *civitas* stones on both the central sector of the Wall and on the Turf Wall sector and reduce the involvement of the civilians to only one occasion.²⁹

There is also evidence that work on building the Wall was slow. Work, we believe, started in 122. It was certainly still continuing in 128, the earliest date for the construction of the fort at Great Chesters on the Wall and Moresby on the Cumbrian coast (*RIB* 1736 and 801).³⁰ There is also archaeological evidence for slow progress. As long ago as 1900 Haverfield recorded a layer of peat, branches, leaves and objects of leather 450mm (1ft 6in) thick at the bottom of the Wall ditch below Chesters fort, which was filled in when the fort was constructed.³¹ This suggests a considerable time had elapsed between the digging of the ditch and the erection of the fort. At Peel Gap tower the Broad Foundation had been laid but 'a deep layer of peat and silt developed before the construction of the Narrow Wall'. 'When construction was resumed a large bonfire was first lit ... the ashes extended both sides of the Broad Wall and overlapped its footings. This suggests an extended time-gap sufficient to allow undergrowth to develop.³² At Great Chesters the returning builders ignored the Broad Foundation which had already been laid and placed their Narrow Wall immediately behind it, while near MC 39 (Castle Nick) the Narrow Wall similarly ignored the Broad Foundation; elsewhere the foundations of the Narrow Wall are cut deeply into the low remains of the Broad Wall which may indicate a significant lapse of time.³³ At Birdoswald, a layer of soil was interpreted as indicating a hiatus in the building programme.³⁴

It is difficult to date any of the above actions – or rather lack of actions. Hadrianic pottery at both Peel Gap tower and Birdoswald demonstrated that the builders returned before 138. The fort at Chesters projects north of the Wall whereas Great

Chesters, apparently constructed within the decade 128 to 138, does not, which places Chesters earlier in the building programme. However, these are not precise dates. The most that we can say is that they indicate that the building of the Wall had become a long, drawn-out process, and, as a result, it is not impossible that it was not completed before the death of Hadrian in 138.³⁵

The concept of a Wall abandoned incomplete in 139/40 is almost inconceivable, but if that was the case, it would not have been unique. It would appear that the western 90km sector of the frontier in the province of Raetia was unfinished for about 40 years.³⁶ There seems to be no reason not to entertain the possibility that part of Hadrian's Stone Wall remained uncompleted at the end of his reign and that the civilians were brought in to help complete the Wall and rebuild the Turf Wall in stone in the years following 158.³⁷

Third century

John Mann's argument that the work of the *civitates* must relate to a period when the island was under one administrative framework is one which appeals to students of Roman provincial administration. However, some points may be cited against it. Soldiers from the two legions of the southern province of Upper Britain are recorded on Hadrian's Wall in the third century, while elsewhere in the empire the staff of the governors of those provinces which did not have legions was provided by neighbouring provinces which did contain legions.³⁸ As soldiers of the two legions of Upper Britain served in Lower Britain, including on Hadrian's Wall, there seems to be no reason why civilians from Upper Britain could not also have worked on the frontier in the third century.

There is evidence for work on Hadrian's Wall in the third century. The Emperor Septimius Severus was credited by many ancient sources as having built the Wall. These do not include the contemporary historians, Cassius Dio and Herodian, but later writers such as Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, Jerome and Orosius. The statements follow two slightly different formulae, the earliest dating to 150 years after Severus, and this was repeated by his successors until it came to be believed that Severus was the original builder of the Wall.³⁹ Perhaps the most significant statement was by Jerome. In his *Chronicle* composed in the late fourth century he recorded under the year 207 that Severus built a wall from sea to sea. In the same year, a soldier carved an inscription on the quarry face at the Written Rock of Gelt.⁴⁰ There is, however, little archaeological evidence for the army of Severus at work on the Wall rather than on its forts. The 'extra-narrow wall' is usually dated to this time, but this is only because it is later than the abandonment of some turrets on the Wall in the late second century.⁴¹ Crow's excavation at Sycamore Gap (between T 38a and MC 39) revealed 'broken pottery and other rubbish ... on the north side of the Wall [which] allowed us to date a limited repair to the later second century'.⁴² Crow acknowledged that the so-called 'Severan' work cannot be dated. Nor can the blocking of the turret recesses be securely dated. This is known to have happened at eleven turrets and we may assume that it was a single plan, but the actions can only be dated to the late second century on the basis of the presence of earlier pottery and the absence of later.

Fourth century

C. E. Stevens considered the date of the stones in two papers published in 1940 and 1941. His argument was based upon his interpretation of a phrase in Gildas's account of the building of Hadrian's Wall. Gildas wrote his polemic, *The Ruin of Britain*, in about 540. He described the building of firstly a turf wall and then a stone wall both intended to stop the attacks of the Picts and the Scots in the years after the end of Roman Britain and stated that the construction of the stone wall, '*sumptu publica privatoque*', drew on public and private funds.⁴³ Stevens linked this phrase to the 'inscriptions recording work on Hadrian's Wall undertaken both by British cities and by at least one private person'.⁴⁴ The accounts by Gildas of the building of both a turf wall and a stone wall in Britain are, however, by common consent garbled and assigned to the wrong time. In any case, it stretches credulity to accept that at a time when the date of the building of Hadrian's Wall had been completely forgotten, a memory existed of its repair by civilians.⁴⁵

Stevens bolstered his case with an interpretation of the *Notitia Dignitatum*. He noted that 'alone of all the *vicarii* in east and west, the *vicarius Britanniarum* has on his picture [in the *Notitia*], not peaceful maidens bringing gifts, but the embattled forts that characterise the commanders of frontiers. That must surely be significant.'⁴⁶ Tomlin differs. He has noted hints at other confusions between civil and military authority in the *Notitia*.⁴⁷ In any case, the picture illustrates the five provinces of the diocese, each named, and each depicted as a fort. It is difficult to see how these individual depictions relate directly to activities on the northern frontier.⁴⁸

As we have seen, John Mann argued that the stones are likely to belong to a period when the whole of Roman Britain was part of one administrative unit and, if the argument remains credible, this was more likely to have been the fourth rather than the second century. It is fair, perhaps, to note the lack of fourth century inscriptions generally which may militate against a late date.

Conclusion

We remain uncertain about the date of the inscriptions recording building work by civilians on Hadrian's Wall. It has been argued above that a date under Hadrian is unlikely for several reasons. A date in the second half of the later second century is only possible if a radical reconsideration of the date of completion of the building of Hadrian's Wall is accepted. There is evidence for building work on Hadrian's Wall under the Emperor Septimius Severus. The fourth century may be less likely than the third century owing to the general lack of fourth century inscriptions.

There remains, as so often in the study of Roman Britain, a propensity to relate an activity to a known event. In the history of Hadrian's Wall, which lasted nearly 300 years, there are literary references to only two periods of building activity, under Hadrian and under Severus, though of course there are inscriptions which record building work on other occasions. It is difficult to conceive that there was no building activity at other times, construction work which has left no record. Indeed, one of the

great values of the series of dendrochronological dates from Carlisle is the number which occur during the phases of occupation and not just at the beginning and end of each period.⁴⁹ It is also worth noting that there is circumstantial evidence which could, as Nick Hodgson has emphasised to me, be used to support one period of time rather than another. In the second century there was a general manpower shortage in the Roman empire. In the face of invasions and plague, Marcus Aurelius pressed slaves and gladiators into joining the Roman army.⁵⁰ It may have been one such occasion of shortage that led to the use of civilians to repair Hadrian's Wall.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this review has been to highlight how little we are certain about key aspects of the building of Hadrian's Wall: how much was completed during Hadrian's reign and how much of the Turf Wall was rebuilt in stone under that emperor. There is enough evidence to raise a serious question over how complete the Wall was before the death of Hadrian, while the evidence from the Turf Wall is too slight to allow any firm conclusions to be made other than at least the most easterly five miles had been rebuilt under Hadrian and the far west end was not rebuilt until later in the second century.

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Abbreviations

CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*

ILS *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*

MC *Milecastle*

RIB *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*

T *Turret*

Notes and references

- ¹ J. Horsley, *Britannia Romana* (London, 1732), Cumberland XXVII
- ² I. A. Richmond and E. Birley, 'Centurial stones from the Vallum west of Denton Burn', *AA4*, 14, (1937), 228. B. Heywood and D. J. Breeze, 'Excavations at Vallum Causeways on Hadrian's Wall in the 1950s', *AA4*, 37, (2008), 122
- ³ J. C. Bruce, *The Roman Wall* (3rd edn. Newcastle upon Tyne, 1867), 416
- ⁴ M. Fulford, 'Corvées and *Civitates*', in R. J. A. Wilson (ed), *Romanitas, Essays on Roman Archaeology in honour of Sheppard Frere ...* (Oxford, 2006), 68-9
- ⁵ D. J. Breeze, *The Frontiers of Imperial Rome* (Barnsley, 2011), 48-51

6. S. Cuomo, 'A Roman Engineer's Tales', *Journal of Roman Studies*, **101**, (2011), 143-65
7. M. Hassall, 'The Written Record and the late Roman Frontier', in R. Collins and L. Allason-Jones (eds), *Finds from the Frontier: Material Culture in the 4th-5th Centuries*, CBA Research Report 162, (York, 2010), 18; A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, (Oxford, 1964), 205. Could Tacitus, *Agricola* 31, Calgacus' speech in which he refers to the Romans consuming 'men's very bodies and hands by building roads through forests and marshes' be a reference to such activities?
8. J. C. Mann, 'A Note on RIB 2054', *Britannia*, **23**, (1992), 236 = J. C. Mann, *Britain and the Roman Empire* (Aldershot, 1996), 173 makes the point that the centurial stones are different from the later building stones. See n. 23 for a list of the later stones. Mann has identified another discrete group in the Sixth Legion inscriptions in the sector west of the River Irthing: J. C. Mann, 'Hadrian's Wall West of the Irthing: The Role of VI Victrix', *Britannia*, **21**, (1992), 236-8 = J. C. Mann, *Britain and Rome* (Aldershot, 1996), 169-72
9. Fulford, 'Corvées and Civitates', 70; E. Birley, *Research on Hadrian's Wall* (Kendal, 1961), 210; C. E. Stevens, 'Gildas Sapiens', *English Historical Review*, **56**, (1941), 359; T. R. Hornshaw, 'The Wall of Severus?', *AA5* **28**, (2000), 32
10. Fulford, 'Corvées and Civitates', 68. This statement, taken at face value, would imply that the civilians came north twice to help with the construction or repair of Hadrian's Wall. This might be thought to be unlikely.
11. Birley, *Research on Hadrian's Wall*, 210
12. *CIL* XII 686 dating to the reign of Philip (244-9)
13. A. L. Rivet and C. Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London, 1979), 392-3
14. D. J. Breeze, *J. Collingwood Bruce's Handbook to the Roman Wall* (14th edn. Newcastle upon Tyne, 2006), 60
15. C. E. Stevens, *The Building of Hadrian's Wall* (Kendal, 1966); D. J. Breeze and B. Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall* (London, 2000), 66-79
16. F. G. Simpson and I. A. Richmond, 'Report of the Cumberland Excavation Committee for 1934', *CW2*, xxxv, 240
17. F. G. Simpson and I. A. Richmond, 'Report of the Cumberland Excavation Committee for 1933', *CW2*, xxxiv, 134-7; 'Report of the Cumberland Excavation Committee for 1934', *CW2*, xxxv, 218-20
18. Simpson and Richmond 1934, 133
19. Simpson and Richmond 1934, 132-6
20. Birley, *Research on Hadrian's Wall*, 85
21. F. G. Simpson, 'Excavations on the Line of the Roman Wall in Cumberland during the years 1909-12', *CW2*, xiii, (1913), 301; F. G. Simpson and I. A. Richmond, 'Report of the Cumberland Excavation Committee for 1932', *CW2*, xxxiii, (1933), figs. 21, 23 and 24; F. G. Simpson and I. A. Richmond, 'Report of the Cumberland Excavation Committee for 1931', *CW2*, xxxii, (1932), 150; P. S. Austen, 'Recent Excavations on Hadrian's Wall at Burgh-by-Sands', *CW2*, xciv, (1994), 40; C. Woodfield, 'Six Turrets on Hadrian's Wall', *AA4*, **43**, (1965), 187
22. N. Hodgson and J. McKelvey, 'An Excavation on Hadrian's Wall at Hare Hill, Wall mile 53, Cumbria', *CW3*, vi, (2006), 52
23. N. Hodgson, 'The Provenance of RIB 1389 and the Rebuilding of Hadrian's Wall in AD 158', *Antiq. J.* **91**, (2011), 1-13; J. C. Mann, 'A Note in RIB 2054', *Britannia*, **23**, (1992), 236-8 = J. C. Mann, *Britain and the Roman Empire* (Aldershot, 1996), 173-5
24. RIB 1341, 1342, 1343, 1344, 1358, 1359, 1360, 1388, 1389, 3320 and 2054. On the date of the stone found at T 33b (RIB 3320) see R. P. Wright in R. Milet and V. Maxfield, 'The excavation of Turret 33b (Coesike)', *AA4*, **50**, (1974), 159. Several of these stones are now lost, but those which survive or for which reasonable drawings exist (RIB 1341, 1343, 1359, 2054 and 3320) are all rectangular blocks
25. J. C. Mann, 'A Note on RIB 2054', *Britannia*, **23**, (1992), 238 = J. C. Mann, *Britain and the Roman Empire* (Aldershot, 1996), 175
26. T. Wilmott, *Birdoswald* (London, 1997), 109-10
27. RIB 2026 and 1737
28. That said, Julian Bennett has argued on the basis of the lack of wing walls at the primary forts of Chesters, Housesteads and Great Chesters that 'at the time they were built, it may not have been intended to complete the curtain': 'A Revised Programme and Chronology for the Building of Hadrian's Wall', P. Freeman, J. Bennett, Z. T. Fiema and B. Hoffmann, *Limes XVIII*, BAR, IS 1084 (Oxford, 2002), 828-9. If Bennett's suggestion is correct, there is here another possible reason for the slow progress on completing the building of Hadrian's Wall.

- ^{29.} The discovery, in the central sector, of chamfered stones indicating the presence of a string course is usually taken as evidence that the Wall was completed, though of course the date is uncertain (P. Bidwell, 'Did Hadrian's Wall have a Wall-walk?' in P. Bidwell (ed), *Understanding Hadrian's Wall*, (The Arbeia Society [South Shields], 2008), 135-6
- ^{30.} It remains possible that these inscriptions wrongly attributed the title of *pater patriae* to Hadrian before his formal acceptance of the title in 128. The inscriptions of 136-7 from Carvoran are often cited as evidence for work still underway towards the end of Hadrian's reign, but the process of repair to a fort should be distinguished from new build
- ^{31.} F. Haverfield, 'Report of the Cumberland Excavation Committee for 1900', *CW2*, i, 86-7; AA2, 23, (1900), 15-6
- ^{32.} J. G. Crow, 'A Review of Current Research on the Turrets and Curtain of Hadrian's Wall', *Britannia*, 22, (1991), 55 is the source of the first quotation; *Britannia*, 19, (1988), 434-6 of the second
- ^{33.} Breeze, *Handbook to the Roman Wall* (2006), 273, 276-7; Crow, 'Review of Current Research', 54-5; Bennett, 'Revised programme', 829-30
- ^{34.} T. Wilmott, *Birdoswald* (London, 1997), 77
- ^{35.} There is evidence for attempts to speed up the building work – the reduction in the thickness of the Stone Wall and in the level of craftsmanship as displayed at some sites – which indicates concern with the progress of the project.
- ^{36.} W. Cysz and F. Hertig, 'Neue dendrodaten von der Limespalisade in Raetien', in A. Thiel (ed), *Neue Forschungen am Limes* (Stuttgart, 2008), 183-95
- ^{37.} Peter Hill has suggested to me that the poor craftsmanship recorded at some sites *may* be an indication that other than relatively skilled military personnel were at work (P. R. Hill, *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall* (Stroud, 2006), 140-4)
- ^{38.} D. J. Breeze, 'The Second Augustan Legion in North Britain', in R. Brewer (ed), *The Second Augustan Legion and the Roman Military Machine* (Cardiff, 2002), 77-81; A. von Domaszewski, *Die Rangordnung des Römischen Heeres*, 2nd edn. by B. Dobson (Köln / Graz, 1967), 29-39
- ^{39.} J. P. Gillam and J. C. Mann, 'The Northern British Frontier from Antoninus Pius to Caracalla', AA4, 48, (1970), 44; T. R. Hornshaw, 'The Wall of Severus?', AA5, 28, (2000), 27-8
- ^{40.} *RIB* 1009
- ^{41.} F. G. Simpson, *Watermills and Military Works on Hadrian's Wall*, Grace Simpson (ed) (Kendal, 1976), 114; Simpson and Richmond 1934, 142; Crow 'Review', 53; Hornshaw, 'The Wall of Severus?', 33
- ^{42.} Crow, 'Review of Current Research', 55
- ^{43.} M. Winterbottom, *Gildas, The Ruin of Britain and other works*, edited and translated by M. Winterbottom (London & Chichester, 1978), 17 and 18
- ^{44.} C. E. Stevens, 'Gildas Sapiens', *English Historical Review*, 56, (1941), 359
- ^{45.} Stevens admitted that there was a problem with his theory for 'they [the *civitas* stones] should, on our interpretation, really come from Gildas's "turf-wall"': Stevens 1941, 359, n. 6
- ^{46.} C. E. Stevens, 'The British sections of the Notitia Dignitatum', *Archaeological Journal*, 97, (1940), 148-49
- ^{47.} R. S. O. Tomlin, 'Notitia Dignitatum omnium: tam civilium quam militarium' in R. Goodburn and P. Bartholomew (eds), *Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum*, BAR SS 15 (Oxford, 1976), 189-209
- ^{48.} See J. J. G. Alexander, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of the Notitia Dignitatum', in R. Goodburn and P. Bartholomew (eds), *Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum*, BAR SS 15 (Oxford, 1976), 11-25 for discussion of the date of the pictures: he argues that they are Carolingian copies of late Roman originals.
- ^{49.} J. Zant, *The Carlisle Millennium Project, Excavations in Carlisle, 1998-2001* (Lancaster, 2009), 106-7, 141, 152-4, 200-1
- ^{50.} *Historia Augusta, Life of Marcus*, 21. For comment on units in the Roman army being below strength see A. Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War 100 BC-AD 200* (Oxford, 1996), 22-4