

ART. IV.—*A Roman inscription from Watercrock.* By
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THE centurion's epitaph, VII 292,¹ was found at Watercrock in 1688, first recorded by Bishop Nicolson and first published by John Horsley, and it is now in the British Museum. Its reading has never yet been established with complete certainty, and there are obvious deficiencies in the most recent description of it to this Society, by R. G. Collingwood in 1929.² But he furnished an excellent drawing of the surviving text, which I reproduce here in order to illustrate the present study, the occasion for which has been a discussion by Professor Ulrich Kahrstedt of certain formulae attested on tombstones in the Rhineland, in which incidental reference is made to one which occurs on the Watercrock stone.³

Collingwood pointed out that the stone had been cut down, in Roman times, for some secondary use; that will allow us to infer the loss of an original first line carrying the opening formula customary, in the European frontier provinces, from about the time of Hadrian onwards, *d(is) m(anibus)*; the remaining lines may then be re-numbered 2-8. In line 2, Collingwood calculated that some 7 letters have been lost (on a consideration of what can be restored with certainty in some of the later lines), and referred to his father's suggestion that the *cognomen* of the deceased had been Bass[anianus] or the like. To

¹ Volumes of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* will be referred to by their roman numbers, without the prefix CIL; EE = *Ephemeris Epigraphica*; ILS = Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*.

² CW2 xxx 106 f., with full references to the earlier publications of the text.

³ U. Kahrstedt, "Defunctus — Obitus: Beobachtungen an lateinischen Grabinschriften" (*Trierer Zeitschrift* 22, 1954, 212-217).

me the number of letters to be allowed for seems likelier to be 8, and in any case, the mention of the man's filiation and tribe should prepare the reader for a reference to his *origo*, after his *cognomen*; we should expect his name, most likely in the dative rather than the nominative or the genitive case, to have been followed by that of his native place, in however abbreviated a form. The next five lines call for no special comment at this stage, but it is necessary to note that, for the last line, Collingwood accepted, and his drawing supports, Haverfield's reading (EE IX p. 683): *ins(tante) Ael(io) Supino* — "under the supervision of Aelius Supinus". The latter's rank or relationship to the dead man (or both) will have followed in the remainder of the line, now missing. As



FIG. 1.—Tombstone found at Watercrook in 1688. (†).

to his *cognomen*, it seems possible that the above reading may need to be revised. I have failed to find any other example of the name *Supinus*; and though one might think of a possible connection with the Italian place-name (in the territory of the Marsi) *Supinum*,⁴ it is perhaps simpler to suppose that the true reading was really *Surino*. *Surinus* occurs in Rætia as a *cognomen* and in northern

⁴ Cf. Schulze, *Lateinische Eigennamen*, 549.

Italy as a *nomen*, and is clearly one of many derivatives of the common name *Surus*, widely attested in Celtic lands and especially common in Noricum.⁵

Line 3 opens with a definition of the dead man's military rank, *q(uon)d(am) 7 leg. XX V. V.*—"some time centurion of the Twentieth Legion, Valeria, Victrix", employing the formula which, as noted by Professor Kahrstedt, only occurs in quantity in Lower Pannonia (as its boundaries were defined in the third century), with its greatest concentration at Brigetio and Aquincum, the two legionary fortresses of that province. Examples of *quondam* used in this way, as the equivalent of "late" or "some time", occur sporadically elsewhere, as he points out; but its presence on a military tombstone should at least suggest to us the possibility that the dead man or his heir, or both, came from Lower Pannonia and had previously served in one or other of its legions, *I Adiutrix* at Brigetio or *II Adiutrix* at Aquincum. In the present case the man's tribe will help us. *Sergia* was that to which Hadrian himself belonged, and it was used by him for allocation to towns to which he granted charters. In eastern Pannonia the two known Hadrianic foundations, Mursa⁶ and Aquincum, both fell to *Sergia*; it is not yet known in what tribe Brigetio was enrolled, but it seems probable that it did not receive a charter until well after Hadrian's day, and that we may therefore leave it out of account in the present instance. Of the two place-names left in question, Mursa is too short to fill the calculated space, but *Aquinco* would fit it admirably; and we may therefore feel justified in assigning to the centurion an origin which explains the employment of *quondam* on his epitaph, and implies that he had begun his service, whether in the ranks or by direct commission into the centurionate, in *II Adiutrix* at Aquincum.

⁵ Cf. Holder, *Alt-celtischer Sprachschatz*, s. vv.

⁶ Cf. the prefect of the *ala Augusta* at Old Carlisle in A.D. 191 (VII 341): *P. Ael(ius) Pub(l)i fil(ius) Sergia Magnus d(omo) Mursa ex Pannon(ia) inferiorē.*

We may now consider the reading of the inscription as a whole:—

[D. M.]
 P. AEL. P. F. SERG. BASS[O AQVINCO]
 Q.D 7 LEG. XX. VV. VIX. AN[.— —]
 ET. PRIVATVS. LIBB. ET. HER. [PER —]
 5. VM. 7 LEG. VI. VIC. FCC. SI Q[VIS IN HOC]
 SEPVLC. ALIVM. MORT[VVM INTVL]
 ERIT. INFER. F. DD. NN. [AVGG. HS. —]
 INS. AEL. SVRINO [— —]

In line 3, the dead man's age and the name of one of his two freedmen must be allowed for, as Collingwood pointed out: "There is room for LX. IVSTVS or the like." In line 4 *per* is required, to introduce the intermediary, a centurion of the Sixth Legion, through whom the monument was erected, in the accusative case; line 5 opens with the terminal *-um* of his name, and between *per* and that there will only have been room for some 5 letters: the centurion can only have been mentioned by his *cognomen*, the *nomen* being omitted. We will return to that point presently.

In line 5, the abbreviation FCC calls for comment (Collingwood tacitly assumed that it stood for *fecerunt*). I have only found one other example of it, on an inscription from Brigetio, ILS 2388 = III 4311:—

*d. m. et memoriae L. Antisti Belliciani vet. leg. I Adiut., et Iuliae Proculae eius, Luci Antisti Bellicus mil. leg. II Adiut. bf. cos. et Bellicianus mil. leg. s. s. exactus off. presidis, parentibus karissimis f. c. c.*⁷

Dessau, who prints the last three letters so, suggests with a query that they stand for *fecerunt*; but in CIL they are shown with a gap between the F and CC, and are interpreted provisionally as *f(aciendum) c(uraverunt)*,

⁷ "To the divine shades and to the memory of Lucius Antistius Bellicianus, veteran of Legion I Adiutrix, and his wife Julia Procula, (the two) Lucii Antistii, Bellicus, soldier of Legion II Adiutrix, consular beneficiary, and Bellicianus, soldier of the aforesaid legion and record-clerk in the governor's headquarters, had this monument made to their dear parents."

the double C implying a pair of dedicators; compare, on the Watercrook stone, LIBB for two freedmen and DD NN for a pair of emperors. Cagnat accepted this interpretation⁸ and we may be content to follow him.

Next comes the cautionary formula: *si q[uis in hoc] sepulc(hrum) alium mort[uum intul]erit, infer(at) f(isco) d(ominorum) n(ostrorum)* [—“If somebody brings another dead person into this tomb, he must pay the treasury of our Lords (the Emperors) such and such a sum.”] The restoration is certain, and gives us the exact length of lines 5 and 6; but the amount of the fine cannot be determined in this case. There is no other British example of one of these *multae*, fines payable for infringement of the rights of tomb-property; and reference to Dessau's convenient selection of instances, indexed in ILS III, p. 921, shows that the sums specified varied widely, from a thousand sesterces upwards, and there does not seem to be a safe basis for estimating what sum was most usual in any particular period, though there was clearly a tendency for the figure to be higher on later inscriptions. In any case, however, the practice of including such formulae on tombstones seems to be of relatively late origin, and we should not expect to find it employed in Britain earlier than the third century, to which on other grounds one would wish to assign the Watercrook inscription: witness, for instance, the form of its lettering (particularly the G), and its use of the title DD NN for the emperors.

It was that title, indeed, which led Collingwood to postulate a late date for the text, though we cannot accept his reasoning:—

“The title ‘Our Lords’ is occasionally used as early as the middle of the third century (by the Philips, before 250); but it does not become at all common until the time of Diocletian, and therefore the inscription probably dates after 284.”

It would not have needed much research to show the weakness of the premise. Here it may suffice to quote

⁸ *Cours d'Épigraphie Latine*, 4th ed., 1914, 429.

the case of ILS 2103 = VI 210, dedicated in Rome on 7 January 208, by a soldier discharged on completion of his engagement, after service in the 10th Praetorian Cohort, *pro salute dd. nn. Augg.*—"for the health of our two Lords, the Emperors" (in this case, Severus and Caracalla). The practice may have started a little later in Britain; it may be recalled that ILS 9317 = VII 875, from the Brampton area, calls Caracalla *dom. nost. invic. imp.*, as if the abbreviation D N would still have been too drastic for all readers to understand it; yet VII 396, from Maryport, by its style might well be Severan, and it carries the simple text, *Victoriae Augg. dd. nn.* There are other British instances from the first half of the third century:—

ILS 2619 = VII 965 (Netherby, dated A.D. 222): *imp. d. n. Severo Alexandro Pio Fel. Aug.*

VII 966 with EE IX p. 609 (ibid., assignable to the same year): *imp. p. dd. [nn.]*

VII 218 (Ribchester, A.D. 238/244): *pro salute d. n.*

VII 315 (Old Penrith, clearly the text which Collingwood had in mind): *I. O. M. et g(enio) dd. nn. Philipporum Augg.*

There is thus no need to press for so late a date as Collingwood postulated, and indeed such a date must in any case be ruled out, because of the mention of the dead man's tribe. I have pointed out elsewhere that the latest mention of his tribe by an equestrian officer serving in the Rhineland is on an altar of A.D. 249,⁹ and it may be added that by that date virtually nobody thought fit to mention what had long been something of an antiquarian survival. The mention of *Sergia* on the Watercrock stone ought, therefore, to point to a date as early as possible in the third century, rather than towards its close; while DD NN indicates that it was set up in a period when there were joint emperors (as under Severus and Caracalla on the inscription from Rome, cited above). There seems nothing to forbid the assumption that it was set up in their reign, though one obviously cannot dogmatize on

⁹ *Roman Britain & the Roman Army*, 1953, 170, referring to XIII 6658.

the point. At least, we know that at that period all three of the legions of Britain were engaged in active work, whether of restoration or in the field, in the north of Britain, and it might be thought more likely that a centurion of the Twentieth should find his way to a tomb at Watercreek, in what was on any showing part of the Lower province, at such a time rather than later in the century: though we must remember that there were occasions, in later years, when some legionaries from the Upper province were lent to *Britannia inferior*, and no doubt they were accompanied by some of their officers.

With the last line, we reach another point on which it is not easy to accept Collingwood's reasoning. He defines the relationship between the heirs and the centurion of the Sixth thus: —

“the heirs employed the regimental mason of the Watercreek garrison to make the monument, by leave of the commanding officer, who was a centurion of the York legion,”

and notes of the last line: —

“Added in another hand. Aelius Supinus was the regimental mason.”

But surely, if the “regimental mason” made the monument, he would use the same hand for the whole text! If the last line is by a different hand, it presumably represents a postscript, adding details which the original craftsman had omitted. Let us see if we can find an explanation of it.

We have seen that the dead man's heirs were two freedmen of his, and that they caused the monument to be made for him, through the good offices of a centurion of the Sixth; but in their inscription they mentioned him by his *cognomen* only, nor did they explain how “a centurion of the York legion” came to be involved in the matter. It might be simplest to suppose that he himself took steps to amplify their text, causing an additional line to be added, giving his *nomen* and, in the latter part of the line, defining his status at Watercreek: 7, *praeep.*

coh. would do, if ligatures may be supposed to have been used for it.

The inscription as a whole, therefore, will have read somewhat as follows:—

[*d(is) m(anibus)*] | *P(ublio) Ael(io) P(ubli) f(ilio) Serg(ia)*
Bass[o, Aquinco,] | *q(uon)d(am) (centurioni) leg(ionis) XX*
V(aleriae) V(ictricis), vix(it) an(nis) [—, ——] | *et Privatus*
lib(erti) et her(edes) [per Surin] | um (centurionem) leg(ionis)
VI Vic(tricis) f(aciendum) c(uraverunt). si q[uis in hoc] |
sepulc(hrum) alium mort[uum intul] | erit, infer(at) f(isco)
d(ominorum) n(ostrorum) [Aug(ustorum) (sestertium) ——.] |
ins(tante) Ael(io) Surino [(centurione), praep(osito) coh(ortis).]