

The Probable Date of the Roman Occupation of Melandra.

IN the absence of any literary record or of any explicit epigraphical evidence found on the spot, our strongest clue, in attempting to fix the date of the construction or occupation of a Roman fort, is to be sought in the characteristic features, if any such present themselves, of the plan and design of the fort. Two such features demand attention in the case of Melandra. The first is the position occupied by the four corner towers relatively to the line of the rampart: they are all internal,¹ as in the very similar fort of Hardknott Castle in Cumberland, not projecting beyond the line of the walls, as they do in forts of third century construction, such as Richborough and Pevensey. The second piece of evidence of the kind is the wide gateway with its double arch. In forts of later date the gateway is single and narrower. Here again, as at the corners, the towers are wholly internal, in contrast with the projecting gate-towers of the later type. Both these features mark Melandra as belonging to a type of fort which reached its perfection under Antoninus (138—161 A.D.).² The conclusion to be drawn, then, from the evidence of constructive design is that the fort is not later than the early part of the second century, possibly as early as the latter part of the first century.

The most precise evidence for the date is the centurial stone found in the camp in 1771, and here photographed,

1. Cf. the plan and pp. 35 f., 53 f.

2. Garstang, "On some Features of Roman Military Defensive Works": Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, vol. iii.

Found in 1771



The Centurial Inscription.

To face p. 122

CHO I
FRISIAVO
C VIVIT
ALIS

which reads CHO. T. FRISIAVO. O. VAL VITALIS, *i.e.*, *Cohortis Primae Frisiauonum Centurio Valerius Vitalis*, "Valerius Vitalis, Centurion of the First Cohort of the Frisiavones."³ The occasion of this inscription cannot be precisely determined; a probable conjecture is that it was set up when the wall of the fort was repaired, or possibly even when it was originally built, by the First Cohort of the Frisians. A cohort, usually about 600 strong, was the normal garrison of a fort of the Melandra type. Similar centurial stones of the same cohort are found in the remains of the Roman fortress of Manchester (*Mancunium*), the occasion of one at least of which⁴ was the building of a portion of the wall of the fort. This is indicated by P. XXIII., signifying the length of wall built by the Cohort. The "Notitia Dignitatum," an imperial record of Roman officials dating probably from the earlier part of the fifth century A.D., mentions as stationed at Vindobala, on the Roman wall in N. Britain, "The Tribune of the First Cohort of the Frixagi." This has been conjecturally identified (possibly the reading is corrupt) with the First Cohort of the Frisians; but in any case, owing to its late date, it has little bearing on the occupation of Melandra. Much more to the point is the

3. [I cannot succeed in recalling the author of what seems the very plausible conjecture that these very Dutchmen may have been among the *lectissimi auxilium*, "the flower of the cohorts of our allies," of whom Agricola made such striking use in his invasion of Anglesey (Mona). Tacitus tells us (Agric. 18, 5) that when he saw the shore of the island on the other side of the (Menai) Strait full of warriors and Druids, he sent across these auxiliaries, "who were familiar with the task of fording and were practised swimmers in their own country, taking both their arms and their horses with them over the water to be crossed." If so, the presence of these Frisians at Mona in the year 78 will be another welcome encouragement for referring the foundation of Melandra to Agricola's time. In any case, the reason for sending a cohort from the Low Countries to both Melandra and Manchester becomes abundantly clear from Prof. Boyd Dawkins' description (*supra*, p. 2). Round Melandra the thirstiest Dutchman could swim to his heart's content. Ed.]

4. C.I.L., vii., 213; our *insc.* is given in the same section.

evidence of two "diplomata," dated 105 A.D. and 124 A.D. respectively. These diplomata are attested copies of the official records of the grant of Roman citizenship to members of auxiliary, *i.e.*, non-Roman, "alae" and cohorts who had served a stated number of years in the Roman army away from their own homes. We have four "diplomata" of the kind relating to troops serving in Britain; they belong to the years 103, 105, 124 and 146.⁵ The second and third include the First Cohort of the Frisians (*Frisiauvones*), who appear neither in the earliest nor in the latest of the series. This might at first sight appear to suggest the conclusion that the Frisian Cohort came first to Britain between 103 and 105 A.D., and left the country between 124 and 146 A.D., a conclusion which would fix the occupation of Melandra, at least by the First Cohort of the Frisians, as lying somewhere between the extreme limits of 103 and 146 A.D. Unhappily, this conclusion is not warranted by the evidence. The diploma of 103 contains the names of eleven cohorts, of which only one, the First Cohort of Spaniards, appears in the diploma of 105. The diploma of 124, containing 21 cohorts in all, includes five which appear in 103, four of which are not found in the intervening diploma of 105. The diploma of 146, again, contains the Fourth Cohort of the Lingones, which appears in the diploma of 103, but not in those of 105 and 124.⁶ This evidence points to one

5. Mommsen, C.I.L., iii., pp. 902 ff.

6. It is perhaps worth while to summarize the contents of the "diplomata" for the purpose of comparison. Referring to the four chronologically as A, B, C and D, we have the following result.

Peculiar to A—5 cohorts out of 11.			
"	"	B—6	" " " 11.
"	"	C—10	" " " 21.
"	"	D—5	" " " 11.
Common to AB only—none.			
"	"	AC	" —3 cohorts.
"	"	AD	" —1 "
"	"	CB	" —4 "
"	"	CD	" —2 "
"	"	ACD	" —1 "
"	"	BCD	" —1 "
"	"	ABCD	" —1 "

of two conclusions; either the cohorts did not serve continuously in one province, but were moved from province to province and back again at quite short intervals, or else—and this view, which Mommsen holds, is almost certainly correct—the diplomata do not contain complete lists of all the foreign cohorts serving in Britain during the year to which they refer. On either hypothesis our suggested conclusion as to the extreme limits of the presence in Britain of the First Cohort of the Frisians (103—146) is invalidated. That cohort might, on either supposition, have appeared in an earlier diploma than that of 103, or in a later one than that of 146. The only indisputable inference from the evidence of the diplomata is that the cohort was in Britain in 105 and again in 124, and that in these years, or immediately before them, certain members of the cohort had completed the term of service (25 years) required to qualify them for the citizenship.

There remains to be considered the evidence of pottery and coins found on the site of the camp. The former is discussed at length in Mr. J. H. Hopkinson's article (*v. supra*); it would appear to indicate the presence of the Romans as early as about 80 A.D., and again as late as the second half of the third century. Any conclusion based on the coins can only be put forward with reserve. There is nothing to indicate with any precision the age of the coin at the time it was deposited at the spot where it is discovered. It is no uncommon thing to find in circulation to-day a coin seventy or eighty years old, and it may be doubted whether the life of an ancient coin was shorter than that of a modern; indeed, it might often be longer, as in the absence of an elaborate banking system coins were more apt to be hoarded. At the same time, coins of anything like seventy or eighty years circulation would obviously

be rather the exception than the rule. The point to be borne in mind is that any individual example may happen to be the exception. With this reservation, it will suffice to recapitulate the dates of the Melandra coins. The following dates are certain:—Galba (coin struck in Spain), 68 A.D.; Domitian, 95–6; Trajan, 100 and 109; Hadrian (Jewish coin), 132–5; Alexander Severus, 231–5; Postumus, 259–269; Carausius, 286–293; and Magnus Maximus, 383–8. Besides these there are a few less definitely assignable: two “dupondii,” probably first century “from general appearance”; one “dupondius,” possibly Hadrian; one “dupondius,” first or second century; one “sestertius,” probably second century, Hadrian or Antoninus Pius; one small bronze coin, fourth century “from the size and style of the head” (post-Constantinian).⁷ The evidence of these coins, taken on its surface value, would indicate an occupation begun in the second half of the first century, probably towards its close, and continued till towards the middle of the second, and another occupation from the latter half of the third century till towards the close of the fourth.

We have seen ⁸ that Ostorius Scapula was recalled from his Welsh campaign (circa 51 A.D.) by trouble with the Brigantes. Seneca ⁹ attributes a complete conquest of this tribe to the Emperor Claudius, but this is obviously an exaggeration. The first serious campaign undertaken against them was that of Petilius Cerealis, who took up the governorship of Britain in 70 A.D. “He *attacked* (*aggressus*) the state of the Brigantes, which is reckoned

7. The dates here given are based upon an examination of the coins by the British Museum Authorities (see p. 96). [Dr. Grueber gave me orally his own rough general estimate of the average life of a Roman coin (outside hoards) as 15 years.—ED.]

8. *Supra*, p. 115.

9. Sen., *Apoloc. Claud.*, 12, 13–17; [quoted p. 138, *inf.*].

the most populous of the whole province; he fought many engagements, some of them sanguinary, and conquered, or at least overran, a great part of the Brigantes." ¹⁰ It was he who established the Legio II. *Adjutrix* at Lincoln (*Lindum*). It was not, however, till the governorship of Agricola that any thorough conquest of the Brigantes was achieved, and a permanent garrison established in their capital Eburacum (81 A.D.). Melandra, from its position, would probably be one of the earliest places occupied by an army advancing to the subjugation of Yorkshire from the south and south-west. It may possibly have been roughly fortified by Petilius Cerealis; it is at any rate more than probable that it was occupied by Agricola. From this time on till past the middle of the second century the Roman troops were almost constantly engaged against the Brigantes. We have seen ¹¹ that there is reason to conjecture that some time during the early half of the second century, probably towards the end of Trajan's reign (98—117), the IXth Legion garrisoning Eburacum was destroyed by this tribe. Writing in the succeeding reign of Hadrian, the Roman satirist Juvenal describes the typical Roman soldier's life as occupied in storming the hill-forts of the Brigantes.¹² Melandra lies within the southern boundary of the Brigantes, and is more than likely to have been garrisoned by Roman troops during these conflicts. Melandra was connected by a Roman road with the neighbouring fort of Brough (*Anaio*), where in 1903 an inscribed tablet ¹³ was discovered proving that this fort was occupied about 158 A.D. by Roman troops under the prefect Capitonius Fuscus, during the

10. Tac. Agric. 17.

11. Supra, p. 118.

12. Juv. Sat. xiv. 196, quoted p. 132, inf.

13. Cf. "Note on the Inscribed Tablet at Brough." By F. Haverfield, M.A. (Derbyshire Archaeological and Nat. Hist. Society's Journal, 1904).

governorship of Julius Verus. A fragment of stone,¹⁴ originally the top left-hand corner of a similar tablet, was found at Melandra in 1832; it contains the first letters of an inscription—IMP. C, which convey little in themselves. But the form and position of these letters, and the triple moulding which is indicated, are an exact replica of the moulding and the initial letters of the Brough tablet, and it is hardly to be doubted that the two are closely contemporaneous. There is other evidence of widespread activity against the Brigantes during the governorship of Julius Verus. The Brough tablet was found in fragments which had been subsequently used as building material in a sunken chamber of Roman construction in the same fort, proving that Brough was occupied by Roman troops at a date still later than 158 A.D.; and if Brough, then probably the neighbouring Melandra was similarly occupied. The absence of coins of the reign of Antoninus at Melandra is far from proving, or even suggesting, that the fort was not occupied during that reign; but the gap in the numismatic remains of close on a century (135—231 A.D.) does perhaps suggest that there was an interval during which the fort remained ungarrisoned.

On a general survey of the whole evidence, we shall probably be not far wrong in concluding that Melandra was occupied certainly from very early in the second century, and probably as early as about 80 A.D., till past the middle of the second century, and was again occupied, whether after an interval of evacuation or not, from the latter part of the third century, till towards the end of the fourth.

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14. Cf. R. B. Robinson, "Longdendale," p. 52 (published at Glossop in 1863). A sketch made by him of the fragment is preserved with the Glossop collection (cf. p. 110).