

## A NOTE ON COHORS I AQUITANORUM

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There are a good many units of the Roman army whose presence (at one time or another) in Britain is only attested by their inclusion in one or other of the so-called military diplomas, or by their appearance on a single inscription. But there are some for which there is a good deal of evidence: for example there is *cohors IV Gallorum*, in the diplomas dated 122 and 146, and with inscriptions from Templebrough near Rotherham, Castlesteads *per lineam valli*, Castlehill on the Antonine Wall, Risingham and High Rochester between the two Walls, and at *Vindolanda* (Chesterholm) likewise *per lineam valli*, where it has left several third-century inscriptions and where its presence in garrison is recorded in the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Then there is *cohors I Baetasiarum*, in the diplomas of 103, 122, 124 and 135, with inscriptions from Bar Hill on the Antonine Wall, Maryport on the Cumberland coast and finally (if I am right in deducing the chronological order) at Old Kilpatrick at the western end of the Antonine Wall; but, in addition, it has left stamped tiles at Reculver on the southern shore of the Thames estuary, where the *Notitia* records it as the garrison of *Regulbium*. That proves to be the most close analogy to *cohors I Aquitanorum*, of special interest to this Society because of the two inscriptions which record its presence in Derbyshire: RIB 283, showing that it was at Brough-on-Noe during the reign of Antoninus Pius, and specifically when the governor of Britain was Gnaeus Julius Verus, *circa* A.D. 155–158, and RIB 278 from Haddon Hall, a dedication to the Celtic god Braciaca, there equated with the Roman god Mars, by one of the unit's commanders, Quintus Sittius Caecilianus—whose name makes it virtually certain that his home was somewhere in Roman North Africa, and most probably in Numidia.

*Cohors I Aquitanorum* is included in the diplomas of 122, 124 and the fragmentary one assignable to *circa* 130 (CIL XVI 69, 70 and 88), when the governor can be restored with confidence as Sextus Julius Severus, whose name can be restored with no less confidence on the fragmentary text from Carrawburgh (*Brocolitia*) on Hadrian's Wall, RIB 1550. The presence of the cohort in Britain at some time in the third century is on record in an inscription from *Viminacium* in Upper Moesia, on the lower Danube, by the tombstone of Marcus Valerius Speratus, a veteran legionary and town councillor of that place, who as prefect of *cohors I Aquet(anorum)* died in *Brit.* at the age of fifty-five.<sup>1</sup> Then there is a Greek inscription from Cremna in the province of Lycia, fragmentary but sufficient to show that it had been set up to commemorate a man who had been prefect of this cohort in Britain, *Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes* III 396; and an undated tombstone from Ferentinum in Italy, CIL X 5831, commemorates a certain Quintus Caecilius Optatinus, whose mother Pontia *Titi filia* Sabina was presumably a kinswoman, perhaps the daughter of the Titus Pontius Sabinus who in Hadrian's reign brought a task-force of three thousand legionaries *expeditione Britannica*, CIL X 5829 = Dessau 2726, likewise found at Ferentinum. But the reason for discussing this cohort in conjunction with *cohors I Baetasiarum* is that it, too, is attested by a stamped tile or brick (it is not certain which) found in, or rather close to, one of the forts of the Saxon Shore, Brancaster (*Branodunum*), at the eastern edge of the Wash. The *Notitia* has no record of it, so that we may be justified in assuming that it was only in the third century that it occupied that fort—a fort which, like that at Reculver, was demonstrably built early in that century, unlike all or most of the other forts of the *litus Saxonicum*. It seems reasonable to suspect that sea-borne trouble, of one kind or another, may have been the reason for moving units of the army of Britain to those new coastal forts; though one ought not perhaps to exclude the possibility that the two cohorts had been converted in effect into marines, to serve in the ships of the *classis Britannica*, which must have been used to convoy stores in coastwise transit towards South Shields, for the supply of forts on the line of Hadrian's Wall: marines would no doubt have been needed to protect the convoys against pirates, even if the pirates were not yet bold enough to attempt landings on the east coast of Britain.<sup>2</sup>

The Brancaster stamp, reading C(O)H(ORS) I AQ(VITANORVM), was found during excavations by Mr. A. J. Lawson.<sup>3</sup> Since then, one further record of the cohort has turned up, surprisingly, at Leicester (*Ratae Coritanorum*), during excavations by Miss Jean Mellor: a lead sealing, reading C(OHORS) I AQ(VITANORVM).<sup>4</sup> The basic discussion of such sealings is that by the late Sir Ian Richmond in a paper devoted to a study of the large series found, at various times in the nineteenth century, at Brough-under-Stainmore in Westmorland;<sup>5</sup> he showed that they had been attached to packages in transit—in that case—from different forts in the frontier region, and that at Brough-under-Stainmore (*Verterae*) the packages had been opened, no doubt for consolidation into larger parcels, and the lead seals thrown away into the fort's rubbish tip, down by the little river immediately below the plateau on which the fort stood. Most of the Brough-under-Stainmore seals may well have been of third century date, but other seals of the same kind have been found on sites where a somewhat earlier date seems more probable; so that we cannot yet judge with certainty whether our cohort had been sending some packet or other from Derbyshire or from Norfolk (to use the modern geographical names). But it may be worth while to take note that one of the seals from Brough-under-Stainmore was of *cohors II Nerviorum*, its reverse having the legend METAL (i.e. showing that the packet contained something from the *metalla*, the lead mines of Alston Moor, that cohort being at Whitley Castle in the third century, close to the lead mines which deep into the nineteenth century were still yielding a profitable amount of silver). The analogy with *cohors II Nerviorum* may well be thought to justify the supposition that *cohors I Aquitanorum* had been sending to Leicester a packet of silver from lead mines in the neighbourhood of Brough-on-Noe.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup>The basic publication of his tombstone is CIL III 12659, reproduced as Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae selectae* 7173; but the reading can be improved from a photograph published in the Vienna *Jahreshefte* xv(1912), 184, Fig. 123.
- <sup>2</sup>For the Saxon Shore see Stephen Johnson, *The Roman Forts of the Saxon Shore*, (London 1976), and his paper 'Channel commands in the Notitia' in *Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum*, ed. Roger Goodburn and Philip Bartholomew (BAR Supplementary Series 15, 1976, 81–102).
- <sup>3</sup>A. J. Lawson, *Britannia VI* (1975), 288.
- <sup>4</sup>*Britannia VII* (1976), 386.
- <sup>5</sup>I. A. Richmond, 'Roman leaden sealings from Brough-under-Stainmore', *Cumberland and Westmorland Transactions*, new series xxxvi (1936), 104–125.