



BRIGOMAGLOS and *RIACUS*: A Brave New World? The Balance of Power at Post-Roman Vindolanda

By Andrew Birley*

ABSTRACT

This paper provides a brief overview of Vindolanda and its landscape and the changes that occurred in the late fourth century. The BRIGOMAGLOS and RIACUS inscriptions and their context are then discussed, followed by a survey of the archaeological evidence for the nature of the post-Roman occupation of the site.

INTRODUCTION

Although the Roman occupation in Britain is generally believed to have come to an end soon after A.D. 400, exactly what happened next has remained relatively poorly understood. At the Roman site of Vindolanda there is conflicting evidence from the post-Roman fifth and sixth centuries for continuity and for change. Unusually, the site has provided the names of two individuals who lived through those times, *Brigomaglos* and *Riacus*. It can be difficult to appreciate just how much is in a name, but it could be argued that in post-Roman Britain names such as these had a power of their own and may carry with them facets of their owners' identities, hinting at status, origins and affiliations. However, before we consider who *Brigomaglos* and *Riacus* might have been, we must carefully examine them in the context of the site itself, how it was transformed from being Roman to something that was at least nominally different, and the landscape in which its post-Roman population existed.

Transformations are something that the site of Vindolanda was familiar with long before the end of Roman Britain. The site was a place of constant, occasionally complete, renewal throughout its occupation. Therefore a brief overview of Vindolanda and its landscape is needed to understand the changes that took place to the site at the end of Roman Britain in the context of what had come before. A discussion of the context and origins of *Brigomaglos* and *Riacus* is then offered before an examination of the archaeological evidence for post-Roman activity on the site draws together conclusions about the world in which they may have lived, brave, new, or otherwise.

CONSTANT RENEWAL

Current knowledge suggests that the first Roman fort at Vindolanda was constructed in around A.D. 85, and the site remained garrisoned by elements of the Roman army, with the occasional gap (Birley, R. 2009, 141–68), up to the end of the fourth century. During this time, no fewer than nine forts were constructed at Vindolanda between *c.* A.D. 85 and 213, in a process of constant renewal which would eventually create a depth of archaeological deposition of up to 7 m below the modern surface level. The Vindolanda archaeological deposits are unusually deep for such a relatively short period of time, each layering of the site helping to preserve what was below. The early forts (*c.* A.D. 85–140) were constructed primarily in timber rather than in stone. But despite the difficulties encountered by the depth of the remains, they are relatively well

* Vindolanda Trust; andrewbirley@vindolanda.com

understood because of a combination of sealed anaerobic deposits and the recovery of a large number of ink-on-wood documents, known as the Vindolanda writing-tablets (Bowman and Thomas 1994; 2003; Birley, A. R. 2002; Birley, R. 2009).

By the later part of the second century the Roman builders at Vindolanda switched to stone construction, building two stone forts, superimposed one on top of the other between *c.* A.D. 180 and 213. In the third century the final stone fort and its associated *vicus* flourished. However, by the end of the third century, *c.* A.D. 280–300, the *vicus* had been largely abandoned with subsequent occupation only continuing in an intensive manner inside the walls of the fort. This is a typical feature of the frontier occupation towards the end of the third century, with many sites appearing to lose extramural *vici* or other features, perhaps as a result of a large reduction in garrison size/shape or as a direct policy (Bidwell and Hodgson 2009, 29–34; Hodgson 2009, 35). In the early fourth century, *c.* A.D. 302–304, the interior of the fort was extensively modified, traditional barracks being replaced by chalets; further modifications occurred again in the 350s and 370s (Birley, R. 2009, 145). It is unclear whether or not there was a gap in occupation of the site at the end of the fourth/beginning of the fifth century, but by the middle of the fifth century it is certain that further modifications to standing buildings had taken place inside the fort. Buildings in the central range — the *principia*, *horrea* and *praetorium* — were extensively altered, and new structures were built over the existing third- and fourth-century road network and ramparts in the north-western quadrant. The fort wall defences were strengthened with a new tower on the south wall and ruinous sections of fort wall were strengthened (Birley, A., and Blake 2007, 48–51).

LANDSCAPE

The length of occupation at Vindolanda, over six centuries, makes it one of the longest continually occupied sites on the Roman frontier outside the urban centres at Carlisle and Corbridge. The location of the site, on the Stanegate road, once linking the Roman sites of Corbridge (*Coria*) in the east and Carlisle (*Luguvalium*) in the west, was undoubtedly an important factor in its continued existence throughout the period. However, Vindolanda's geographical location relative to other Roman/post-Roman settlements cannot be used to entirely explain why the site continued to be used and renewed for such a length of time, nor why the site was eventually abandoned altogether after the end of the ninth century. For this, we need to appreciate what made Vindolanda viable or attractive as a military installation/settlement to the Roman army and how those same factors may have been crucial to its continued existence in a post-Roman world. One such consideration is its initial military purpose, which may have been more than simply to fill in a gap in the line of a Roman frontier. The strategic position of Vindolanda can be seen in the context of securing the landscape on both east/west (eventually to become the line of Hadrian's Wall) and north/south axes, sitting at the junction of the north/south Allen valley with the east/west Tyne valley, projecting the power of Roman rule onto the surrounding pre-Roman population.

A vital factor in the continued successful development of the site would have been the ability of the community to sustain itself within the surrounding landscape. This would have varied through time, depending on a combination of factors such as population density, farming practices and the extent to which it was possible to sustain the population through externally sourced supply. It is therefore worthwhile briefly considering how the population and its requirements would have altered through time, and how the post-Roman population of Vindolanda may have fitted in this cycle. In *c.* A.D. 85 the First Cohort of Tungrians at the site had a nominal strength of 500 men, but by the time of the construction of Hadrian's Wall in the 120s, it is probable that the numbers at Vindolanda, including garrisons, legionary detachments and affiliated extramural communities, may have reached a peak of 3,000–4,000. By the third century the garrison in residence was the Fourth Cohort of Gauls with a strength of *c.* 600 soldiers (a part-mounted cohort), and the site may have supported double that number if we include those who lived in the adjacent *vicus*. Towards the end of the third century the *vicus* was abandoned, and it is unlikely that the site ever supported a community larger than 600 again, including the garrison

strength which may not have amounted to more than a few hundred soldiers by the end of the fourth century (Hassall 1999, 37). Further remodelling of the interior of the fort, including the replacement of habitations such as former chalets built over barracks by more open spaces (Bidwell 1985, 3), suggests that this number would have fallen once more in the post-Roman period of the fifth and sixth centuries. It is likely that this is a picture which would have been replicated to an extent at the other former Roman military sites which have provided evidence for post-Roman activity on the frontier, e.g. Birdoswald (*Banna*) (Wilmott 1997) and Housesteads (*Vercovicium*) (Rushworth 2009).

The name Vindolanda itself gives us a few clues about the landscape surrounding the site, and the issue of sustainability. Although the word probably derived from a Celtic tradition, it was not necessarily a pre-existing native British name. It may have been given to the site by a 'Celtic-speaking' Roman auxiliary unit (Rivet 1980, 1–19), and 'Vindolanda' is taken to mean something like 'white/shining meadow/lawn' or 'fair moor' (Rivet and Smith 1979, 502) or 'white enclosure' (Jackson 1982, 64). This suggests that the area was perhaps the site of an enclosed field or fields, native upland farmland, before the first Roman garrisons arrived. Traces of pre-Roman ploughing and field boundaries have been found beneath the Roman remains on the site (Birley, A. 2003, 1–5), as they have at many places along the line of the Roman frontier in northern Britain, but no traces of a pre-Roman settlement centre have been found beneath the Roman remains so far. The site has a number of powerful fresh ground-water springs, which are resistant to drought conditions. The natural subsoil is boulder clay, ideal for use in the manufacture of building materials, fort ramparts and for pottery and tiles. The adjacent hillsides contain mineral resources and have been quarried and mined for iron, coal, lead, sandstone and limestone in the Roman period, post-Roman period and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Birley, R. 2009, 32; McGuire 2011).

By the end of the third and into the fourth century, when the settlement had shrunk to perhaps only 600 strong within the fort walls, the site had to supply most of the basic needs of the community from locally-grown agricultural produce rather than rely on shipments of grain from bases such as *Arbeia* (South Shields) (Huntley 1998, 68–79; 2007, 205–19; 2013, 99–116). In the context of a post-Roman environment, it is not difficult to imagine a clear continuation of the agricultural practices of the late fourth century, late Roman field-systems/crops and associated facilities continuing to be used into the fifth and sixth centuries. It is extremely unlikely that the fifth- and sixth-century Vindolanda communities were as large as those that were associated with the final Roman military units of the end of the fourth century at the site, as will be shown when we examine the use of space within the fort in this period. Therefore we can surmise that the post-Roman population at Vindolanda could have easily been resourced from the fort's surviving hinterland in this period.

Added to regular agricultural practices, the ability to supplement the standard diet of the community through hunting may also have been an important factor for continued occupation into the post-Roman period. Collins notes that on many post-Roman sites there is a greater variety of evidence for 'wild fowl, fish and shell fish, and venison' (Collins 2012, 137) rather than any evidence for a particular regression in diet. Certainly the early Roman occupants at the site found a landscape rich in game and were able to indulge in their passion for hunting, especially the commanding officers. There are several references in the Vindolanda writing-tablets to such hunting activity by the commanding officers of the fort, e.g. in *Tab. Vindol.* 233 (Bowman and Thomas 1994, 206–7), *Tab. Vindol.* 593 (Bowman and Thomas 2003, 47–8), *Tab. Vindol.* 594 (Bowman and Thomas 2003, 48–52), and *Tab. Vindol.* 615 (Bowman and Thomas 2003, 77–8).

As the site progressed into the second and third centuries the excavations have produced less evidence for deer, birds and other forms of game in the animal bone record, but this is reversed once more in the fourth-century and post-Roman deposits show that hunting game became an increasingly important part of supplementing the diet, as noted by Collins (Collins 2012, 137). With a smaller population to sustain in the fourth century than in previous years there may have been a lower drain on the wildlife resources surrounding the site, allowing for the return or partial return of the landscape that the Roman garrisons first encountered in c. A.D. 85.

Raising and using hunting hounds, something for which Roman Britain was well known, was

also an important social and cultural activity for members of the community at the site, certainly throughout Roman times for which we have both writing-tablet and animal bone evidence (Birley, A. R. 2002, 147–51; Bowman and Thomas 2003, 47–52; Bennett 2007, 163). It is extremely likely that this practice would have remained a popular activity into the post-Roman period. Such an activity may have brought with it a raised social status or notion of self-worth within the community for the hunters themselves and may have involved many more people than simply the élite members of the community.

BRIGOMAGLOS AND RIACUS

The *Brigomaglos* stone was discovered at the site of Vindolanda by Robert Blair and J. Collingwood Bruce in 1889, lying amongst a pile of loose stones heaped outside the kitchen door of Chesterholm Cottage (Birley, R. *et al.* 1999, 22). They contacted the landowner John Clayton and persuaded him to move it to his collection at Chesters where it is now on display at the museum. Clayton later discovered that the stone had originally been taken from another pile of stone ‘a little to the northeast of the fort’ which had been collected some time before for the construction of a new road (which was never built). As Robin Birley later speculated, the stone may have been used as part of an ancient farmhouse, named ‘Little Chesters’, which was once situated just to the west of the north gate of the last stone fort at Vindolanda, between the Stanegate road and the fort itself, and had been demolished before the 1871 census (Birley, R. *et al.* 1999, 22–3). It is clear that there are no significant clues as to the original location of the stone and it could have been procured as building material from any part of the site, perhaps as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Bruce reported the discovery of the stone to the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries at their meeting on 11 November 1889; he drew attention to the Christian formula, [HIC] IACIT, and to the obvious British name of the deceased and first suggested that this must have been a monument to a post-Roman inhabitant (FIG. 1). Haverfield then made the intriguing suggestion that Vindolanda’s *Brigomaglos* might have been the same person as *Brigomaglus*, also known as *Briocus*, a priest sent from Gaul to join St Germanus in the late fourth or early fifth century



FIG. 1. The BRIGOMAGLOS stone. (After Collingwood and Wright 1965)

and a friend of St Patrick (Haverfield 1918, 29–30). This view was accepted by scholars without a great deal of debate and when Wright completed the Vindolanda section of *RIB* vol. I, he noted the *Brigomaglos* stone (without awarding it a *RIB* number) and restored the damaged text to follow the Haverfield suggestion (Collingwood and Wright 1965, 541):

BRIGOMAGLOS IACIT [qui et Brioc]US

Brigomaglos, who is also known as Briocus, lies here.

This suggestion was later dismissed by Jackson in his comprehensive re-evaluation of the stone when he suggested a plausible alternative reading (Jackson 1982, 60).

BRIGOMAGLOS [HI]C IACIT ... C(or G)US

Brigomaglos lies here ...

Jackson pointed out that the name of *Brigomaglos* is a familiar type of Celtic name, consisting of two main elements *brigo* meaning ‘high’ and *maglos* meaning ‘chief, lord’ (Jackson 1982, 62). This view was supported by Swift in her book *Ogam and the Earliest Christians* (Swift 1996); she suggested that the name *Brigomaglos* appeared to have Welsh and Irish connections, and that it could alternatively be translated to mean ‘mighty prince’. All of the scholars who have studied the stone broadly agree on the dating, which must be somewhere between A.D. 500 and 600, placing *Brigomaglos* firmly into the post-Roman environment.

Whether or not *Brigomaglos* was a ‘high chief, lord’ or ‘mighty prince’, it seems certain that he was a man of stature and was given a formal Christian burial with an accompanying tombstone which reflected this status. It is plausible that *Brigomaglos* was a chieftain of a warband, and the *de facto* head of the Vindolanda community in the fifth or sixth century. The transformation from Roman fort to seat of power for a warband (or possibly bandit) leader has been put forward for the nearby fort of Birdoswald by its excavators, thanks to the discovery of a post-Roman hall built over the remains of the Roman period granaries at the site (Wilmott 1997, 224). Such a model could easily be applied to many more of the military installations along the former frontier (Collins 2012, 154–70), and it would appear that at Vindolanda there is as strong a case as at any other former Roman army site for such a force.

It is unlikely that we will ever know whether or not *Brigomaglos* himself was as literate as the person who carved the commemoration on his tombstone. Someone in the community, perhaps a priest, or a fellow family member, had the means to do so. The presence of a Christian religious figure at Vindolanda can be inferred from several archaeological sources. The foundation of a late Roman church in the courtyard of the *praetorium* (Birley, R. *et al.* 1999, 20–3) is supported by the recovery of a portable Christian altar featuring a *chi rho* (dated to c. A.D. 600) during the 1999 fort wall excavations and other early Christian carvings which make this supposition beyond any reasonable doubt (Birley, R. 2009, 169).

The second post-Roman name came from the excavations of the site in 2008; it was discovered set into a small, plainly bordered panel carved on the foundation step of a commercial building on the north side of the *via principalis*, opposite the north wall of the most-westerly of the two granaries (FIG. 2). This was a building that had originally been constructed in the fourth century, but was then modified into the fifth century, with several new refurbishments that were situated above the final phase of late Roman occupation.

Riacus is not attested elsewhere, but, like *Brigomaglos*, the name is of a typically Celtic type.



FIG. 2. The RIACUS inscription.

The first part is related to the word for 'king', *rix* (close to Latin *rex*) and it is found as a suffix in numerous personal names, of which Vercingetorix is the most famous. As a prefix, one finds the forms *Rigi-*, e.g. the god Mars *Rigisamus*, *RIB* 187 (cf. 711, *Deo Mar(ti) Rigae*) and *CIL* XIII, 1190, and *Rigo-*, the latter particularly in place-names, e.g. *Rigodunon*, 'royal fort', Ptolemy, *Geog.* 2.3.10 (thought to be the Roman Castleshaw: Rivet and Smith 1979, 448).

Numerous examples of names beginning with *Ri-*, *Ric-*, *Rig-*, and *Rio-* are cited by Holder (Holder 1922, cols 1181–92). He cites one that looks close to *Riacus* at 1191: *Riocus*, an early medieval Breton saint. Patrick Sims-Williams has kindly offered the following comment: 'RIACVS would be expected as the earlier form of RIOCVS ... A post-Roman date, at least down to 600, would be fine. Originally it should have been *RIGACVS but the 'gh' was lost sporadically after the long 'I', so there is not a problem about it being late Roman either.'

For *rix*, see Holder II, cols 1197–8. The termination *-aco*, *-acus* is extremely common: Holder I, cols 20–31, gives hundreds of examples; he notes that the first letter is sometimes short, sometimes long, but always stressed.

It is impossible to tell whether or not *Brigomaglos* and *Riacus* would have been contemporaries of one another at the site in the fifth or sixth century, but the mere fact that they were both commemorated by inscriptions carved in stone offers some potentially interesting associations. Perhaps the most important is the continuation of a form of a Latin tradition at the site which stretches back to its Roman foundation c. A.D. 85, one that is so well represented by the Vindolanda tablets and other inscriptions on stone from the site. It is difficult to know whether or not commemorations on stone were as standard at Vindolanda in the fifth and sixth centuries as they had been in previous centuries, but it can be suggested that there would have been little point in writing something down, or carving a dedication on stone, if no other member of the community could read or understand it. Therefore the *Brigomaglos* and *Riacus* inscriptions open the door to the possibility of a more widely literate community at the site than had previously been expected from the end of Roman Britain.

POST-ROMAN BUILDING/REMODELLING INSIDE THE FORT

Whilst there is not enough room here to discuss every aspect of the archaeology of post-Roman Vindolanda, some of the principal features provide a flavour of the changes that were made to the site in this period, particularly to the central range of the fort.

Whatever the status of *Brigomaglos* and *Riacus*, they and their compatriots were as 'active' in changing the layout of the fort to suit their needs as the Roman army units that had gone before them.

Practically all the changes identified as being typical of this period by Collins in his chapter on 'Interpreting Military Transformations' into the fourth and fifth centuries at Roman military sites are present at Vindolanda (Collins 2012, 74–110). These include the modification of all of the major internal structures in the central range — *principia*, *praetorium* and *horrea* — as well as barrack refurbishment/or demolition, new defensive works, infringements on road spaces, and the addition of internal bath suites. The difference between what happened at Vindolanda and what has been identified at many of the other sites is that, at least in part, post-Roman builders retained the use of stone foundations for their buildings whilst elsewhere, e.g. Birdoswald, they seem to have more readily switched to timber (Wilmott 1997, 212).

PRINCIPIA

When Eric Birley excavated the *principia* of the last stone fort in 1932 (Birley, E. B. *et al.* 1936, 218–57), he encountered a building that had already gone through substantial changes in its final phases of Roman occupation. These had transformed the hitherto functional military space inside the headquarters building into something very different, a residence. While Birley, Richmond and Stanfield speculated that a late Roman *signifer* may have used this space as a house, there is no reason to expect that the commander himself and his family may not have found the building a better alternative to the partly demolished and redesignated space afforded

by the *praetorium* next door. The *principia* was certainly a more robust and potentially multi-functional space. It is easy to see how this would make for an easy transition from Roman army fort commandant's house to post-Roman warlord's residence. Major internal alterations to the *principia*, such as the addition of hypocaust systems to the rooms on either side of the chapel of the standards, effectively turned these rooms into heated living and dining spaces, and were in place by c. A.D. 369 (Birley, E. B. *et al.* 1936, 224). Further additions, which are most likely to be post-Roman in date, include the conversion of the chapel of the standards into a large fireplace/pit, its stone foundation withered away and blackened by extensive use over many years, and with a capacity which would have been large enough to roast something brought back from a hunt, an important communal feature. The sunken strongroom behind the fireplace/pit, with its double strength and re-enforced walls, would have made an excellent larder or storage facility. To the front of the fireplace/pit, was the cross-hall, which could have been admirably used as a feasting hall by the Vindolanda community in the fifth and sixth centuries as perhaps the Period 6A post-Roman building at Birdoswald may have been used (Wilmott 1997, 223).

THE SITE OF THE PRAETORIUM

As with the *principia* next door, the excavation of the *praetorium*, in 1997–98, provided a wealth of information about the final phases of occupation in the fourth century and the further use of this space into the post-Roman period. Major changes to the structure in the late A.D. 360s or early 370s resulted in the at least partial demolition of the western, northern and southern wings of the building. A single coin of the house of Valentinian, dated A.D. 364–375, was recovered from within the core of a mortared wall in the largest of the rooms in the western wing (Room XI), indicating that the demolition may have been piecemeal (Birley, R. *et al.* 1998, 46–8). Taken together, such changes may have made the *praetorium* a less than desirable living space for the commanding officer and his family who could have taken this opportunity to transfer elsewhere within the fort, possibly into the *principia* next door. The north wing of the *praetorium* was replaced by the foundations of a small and robustly constructed bath-house, its apse cutting into the flagged central courtyard of the building. This now open (to the west) courtyard was further disturbed by the foundations of a church which was added to the surviving east wing of the building. Some of the building materials for the new church were clearly transported over the demolished remains of the southern wing of the former *praetorium*, as several large foundation stones were found tipped on top of the remains of the most south-easterly room.

Church foundations like the one at Vindolanda are a possible feature at many of the post-Roman military sites along the Hadrian's Wall frontier. Although nearly all are extremely fragmentary in nature and much debated, their presence has been argued for at Birdoswald (Wilmott 2009, 395), Housesteads (Crow 2004, 114), South Shields (Bidwell and Speak 1994, 103–4), and Vindolanda (Birley, R. *et al.* 1999, 20). Until recently it seemed difficult for many archaeologists to accept the idea of a formal religious space within a Roman fort that was not the 'chapel of the standards', whether Christian or otherwise, but the discovery of a temple to Jupiter Dolichenus in 2009 on the northern ramparts at Vindolanda has conclusively proved that this practice had a long tradition at the site (Birley, A. and Birley, A. R. 2012, 231–57).

It would appear that the bulk of these new facilities, the bath-house and church, remained in use into the post-Roman period, and that they were not replaced at a later date by further construction, nor was there any evidence to suggest that they were in turn systematically demolished to provide an open area adjacent to the *principia*. If anything, it appears that further building work in the post-Roman period encroached into the space left vacant by the demolition of the southern wing of the building and the road to the south of the *praetorium*. Here the foundations of a new building, again in well-dressed, re-used Roman stones (two courses high), were found blocking the street to the south of the *praetorium* and its access to the old east gate of the fort, which must surely have been blocked up or effectively redundant at the time (Birley, R. *et al.* 1999, 23). A newer and much smaller doorway through the fort wall was cut through the foundation of a late Roman building situated on the rampart mound to the north-east of the *praetorium* in this period. It was perhaps this doorway, rather than the old east gate of the fort, which was attached to a flight of stairs leading

to the valley below that was encountered by the Rev. Anthony Hedley when he first acquired Codley Gate Farm near the site in 1818 (Birley, R. 2009, 20).

HORREA

In 2008 the site of the third- and fourth-century granaries was excavated at Vindolanda. These excavations were in part inspired by the results of the work undertaken on the Birdoswald granaries directed by Tony Wilmott from 1987 to 1992, which had been extremely helpful in highlighting the continued use of Roman fortifications into the post-Roman period along Hadrian's Wall. The data from these excavations suggest that by the middle of the fourth century at least one of the buildings, the eastern granary, had ceased to be used for its original function. A large number of coins were recovered from below the floor channels of this building, as were many more from the *via principalis* to the north (almost 1,000), suggesting that here was more evidence of market activity in the late Roman period, inside the walls of the fort (Birley, A. 2013). It is possible that during this period the eastern granary had been converted into a shop or other commercial premises.

Above the late fourth-century levels, as at Birdoswald, the Vindolanda granary sites showed evidence of extensive use into the post-Roman period, with the addition of new, stone-built structures (rather than in timber as at Birdoswald) constructed on top of the solid foundations of the floors and walls of the granaries (FIG. 3). The loosely cobbled surface to the south of the

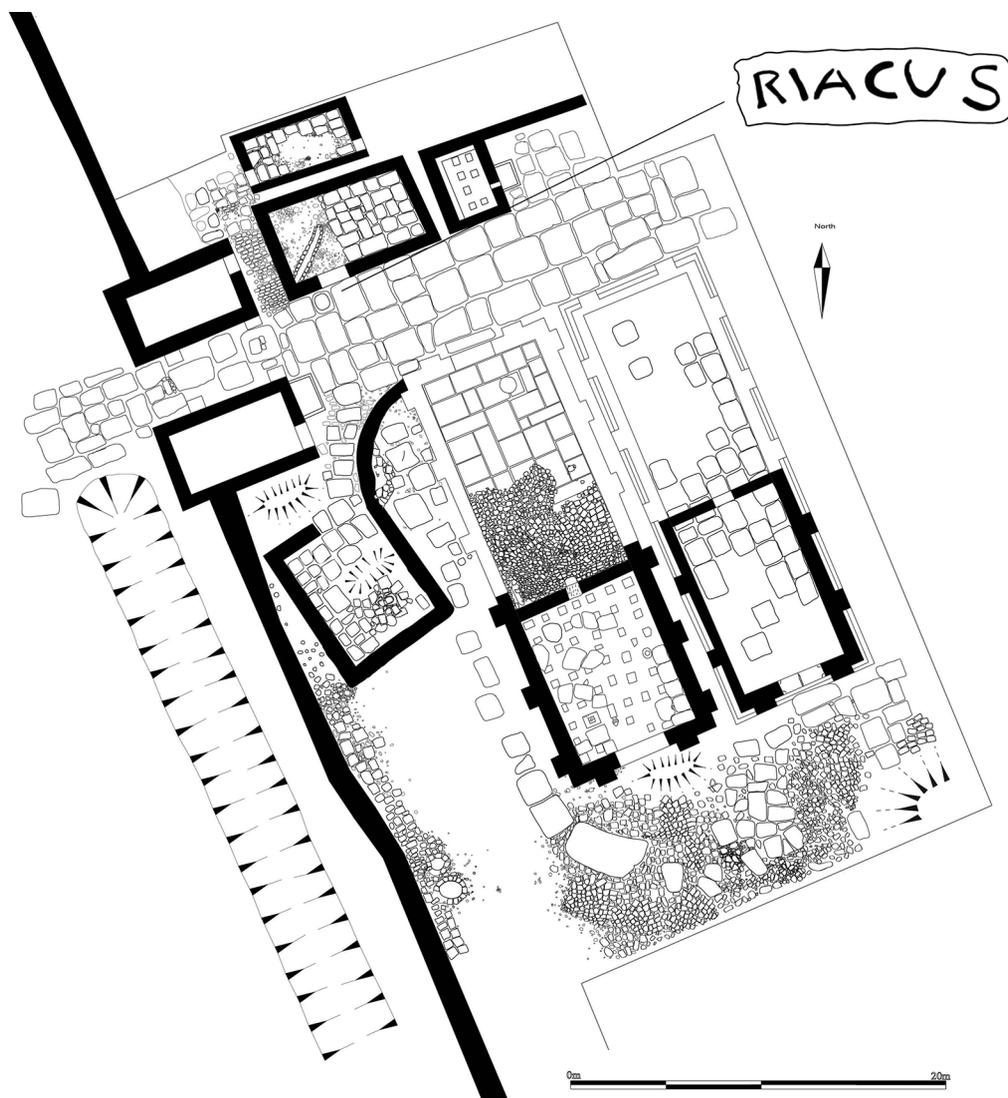


FIG. 3. The site of the granaries in the fifth and sixth centuries with the position of the RIACUS inscription marked.

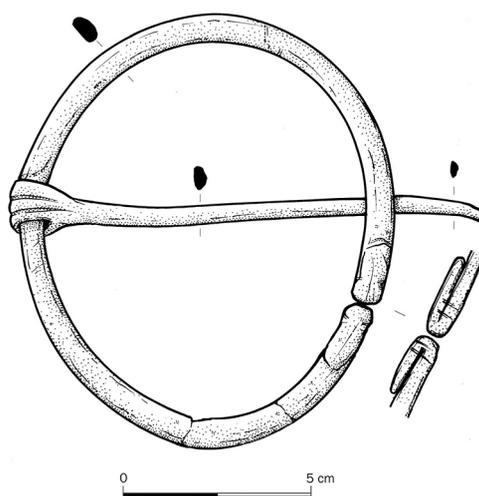


FIG. 4. Type E large post-Roman pennanular brooch from the Vindolanda granary excavations. (Illustration by Mark Hoyle)

buildings produced a complete Type E pennanular brooch of fifth- or sixth-century date, as well as several other brooch pins which may have been from similar brooches (FIG. 4). A robust storeroom had been constructed over the remains of the southern half of the western granary; this building was given a raised hypocaust-style floor (although it showed no sign of burning) that showed a high level of sophistication as well as a need to keep agricultural produce such as grain and foodstuffs dry. A large volume of iron slag was deposited on the floor in front of the building, suggesting that at least low-level industrial activity remained a part of life at Vindolanda into this period. An Anglo-Saxon strap-end was recovered from the fabric of the wall of this building, dated from the ninth century or later, perhaps indicating that either this part of the site remained in use well beyond what has hitherto been expected or perhaps that someone visited the ruins and left this token of their visit behind.

Unlike the functional storeroom structure over the western granary, the eastern granary platform was recycled to build a domestic dwelling. This was achieved by repairing the existing masonry of the granary side walls, and then laying new stone foundations over the filled-in granary floor. Although this building was badly damaged by later stone robbing, enough of the internal divides, and a small fireplace, remained to give a flavour of the space afforded to its occupants. A large hearth was set into the north-eastern corner of the building, and initial analysis of the material from this oven shows the same mix of grains and seeds as found in fourth-century deposits elsewhere across the site. This suggests continuity in the supply of foodstuffs for the community which survived the end of the Roman Empire in the West. The south-western wall of the eastern granary building was rebuilt where a buttress had collapsed and seven stones marked with simple crosses were placed into the rebuild. Whilst stones marked with a simple cross are not uncommon on Roman military sites, taken in the main to be nothing more than mason's marks, such a concentration of crossed stones in one area, which had clearly been subjected to a rebuild, is noteworthy, even if they were not in the form of a *chi rho*. A possible explanation could be that this domestic dwelling was the residence of a priest. An important community figure, such as *Brigomaglos*, would have certainly been afforded good accommodation within the fort and this seems as likely a location as any, perhaps more so than squatting in the dilapidated and part-demolished remains of the old *praetorium* next to the church. This seems even more plausible when one takes into account the fact that the portable Christian altar found in the 1999 excavations (FIG. 5), outside the south wall of the fort, has both a simple cross and a form of the *chi rho* carved upon it. It is impossible to know whether or not *Riacus* was a priest, merchant or even a warlord as has been suggested for *Brigomaglos*, but the proximity of the *Riacus* inscription to the site of the granaries may not have been purely coincidental. The instincts of Haverfield may have been correct, even if he got the wrong man.



FIG. 5. The portable Christian altar with cross and *chi rho*.

THE BRAVE NEW WORLD AND THE BALANCE OF POWER

In this short paper, we have examined how in some ways post-Roman Vindolanda was a different environment from that which defined the occupation in the previous four centuries of direct Roman military rule, and perhaps in this respect it was indeed a brave new world on the old Roman frontier. The interior of the fort had changed from the form of its Roman army configuration, and no longer had a traditionally functioning *praetorium*, *principia* or eastern *horreum*, at least not in the way the Roman army would have used them during previous centuries. However, it has been shown that the significant changes to those spaces within the fort started to happen before the end of the fourth century, rather than after it, instigated under the control of the last 'official' Roman army units to reside at the site. The church and bath-house built over the remains of the *praetorium*, the conversion of the *principia* into a house/hall, and the movement from granary to shop all happened before the end of Roman Britain.

What is clear is that the post-Roman occupants of Vindolanda inherited this changed use of space and rather than attempting to reinvent it, worked with it, consolidating the importance of the buildings in the central range of the fort with renewed relevance to their own lives and times. Late Roman systems of agriculture, industry, power and religion appear to have continued at least in part during this time. The landscape surrounding Vindolanda was in some ways the leveller, dictating what could be sustainably achieved by the community, and it is likely that this was a key factor in allowing for the continuation of occupation into the fifth and sixth centuries. Latin appears to have remained a relevant form of communication at the site, at least on some level, and was more than merely an echo from the past. Some if not all fifth- and sixth-century Vindolanda people would have been able to read and write. Those that could would have been made 'culturally aware' to an extent of the past history of the site through the numerous remaining Roman inscriptions dedicated to regiments of the past, the dead, customs, emperors, builders, gods and goddesses.

Perhaps in the end, the smaller post-Roman communities of which *Brigomaglos* and *Riacus* were members were therefore not so removed from the late Roman garrisons as we have come to think and the balance of power essentially remained the same as before, bonded closely to the élites of the community, the warlords and their priests. The site of Vindolanda may have remained a place from which post-Roman élites projected their own power into the immediate surrounding landscape, as part of a wider 'corridor of power' (Collins 2012, 20), but also as a more local entity in its own right.

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