

I.—TWO ROMAN INSCRIPTIONS ON BRONZE AND BRICK

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(1) Bronze armour-plating from Roman Corbridge

A small plate of bronze¹ was found probably before 1949 in excavations or clearance-work on the Roman site at Corbridge. After cleaning it was seen to have been decorated with an incised figure of Victory and was placed in one of the show-cases in the Corstopitum Museum. On a visit at the time of the Pilgrimage to Hadrian's Wall in 1959 Professor H. Klumbach, Director for Prehistoric Archaeology at the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum at Mainz, observed that the plate carried part of a punched inscription and from a photograph² read the text as *L^R*. He included this item in his authoritative report³ on armour-plating, and kindly sent me a copy of this. It should be profitable to summarise the main features of this type of decorated armour to provide the setting for our example from Britain, which differs in one respect from the 28 examples cited by Dr. Klumbach from the Continent.

The object is part of the left-hand leaf from a pair of panels of decorated bronze armour-plating, $2\frac{7}{16}$ by $1\frac{13}{16}$ in. A rounded stud still survives in the lower left-hand corner riveted to its counterplate on the underside. Beneath the main leaf a small portion of another sheet of bronze is retained by the⁴ counterplate; the edge of it is visible on the

¹ Pl. I, 1.

² Kindly supplied by Mr. J. P. Gillam.

³ Klumbach *Aus Bayerns Frühzeit LXII* (1962) 187-193, Tafel 16.

⁴ The substance of this report was first given in *JRS LVII* (1967) 207 no. 26, pl. XX, 2. Due acknowledgement is here made to the Council of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies for the loan of their block and permission to re-use the material.

photograph. Presumably this represents a metal leaf which extended this breast-plate further to the left. On the right margin the slot into which the clasp fitted still survives, but its outline has been enlarged by damage. These leaves were used in pairs to fasten the upper part of these breast-plates and at the top were curved to fit below the neck. Incised on the leaf is a figure of Victory facing right with a stole draped over her right elbow; her right hand holds a wreath and a garland which has been punched but not incised. Running vertically up the undecorated margin on the right side is a text punched in dots. It was in two lines, but is broken after the fourth letter in line 1; it reads: L^RS[. . . | A[. . . " (Property) of Lars[. . . | a[. . ." Examples of a *nomen* with these first four letters are rare: the choice lies between Larsidius (*CIL XI* 5242), Larsinius (*CIL III* 12663, *VI* 29027) or Larsius (*CIL IX* 5874). Some of these instances are feminine, but on this armour the name will have been masculine. As the latter part of line 1 is lost it is not possible to relate the letter *A* which begins line 2 to the rest of the text. But it is reasonable to suggest that it began the *cognomen* of the owner.

Dr. Klumbach has placed the 29 examples known to him in three groups: eight examples which are repoussé come in Group A (Presstechnik); twenty come in Group B as embossed work (Treibarbeit); our Corbridge item is the sole example in Group C with its incised decoration. It would be interesting to hear whether any other museum in Great Britain has any example of this panelling from Roman armour-plating.⁵

(2) A Roman brick-stamp derived from Trier

The brick-stamp⁶ which forms the subject of this report

⁵ Mr. William Bulmer, Honorary Curator of the Corstopitum Museum, kindly made the panel available for study. I am indebted to the staff of the Photographic Unit of Newcastle upon Tyne University Library for taking the photograph.

⁶ The fragment is $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide, $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. high, and $1\frac{9}{10}$ in. thick. The stamp is $2\frac{7}{10}$ in. (broken) long by $1\frac{1}{20}$ in. high. (70×26 mm.).



Fig. 1. Bronze armour-plating from Roman Corbridge ($\frac{2}{3}$).
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Fig. 2. Roman brick-stamp from Trier ($\frac{2}{3}$)

was discovered by Dr. Grace Simpson at the bottom of a storage chest filled with stamped tiles in Chesters Museum. At first sight it seemed to be a new discovery from Roman Britain and was submitted to me for study and record. One person to whom it was referred suggested that it must have come from one of the Roman sites from which the Clayton family built up their Collection, namely Chesters, Carrawburgh, Housesteads, Great Chesters, Carvoran or perhaps Kirkby Thore. Neither E. A. Budge's *Account of the Roman Antiquities preserved in the Museum at Chesters, Northumberland* of 1903 and of 1907 nor the five series of the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne* record a stamp of this unusual type. So I inspected the fascicule containing the tile-stamps of Roman Germany, *CIL XIII pars vi*, p. 147, and found that the Landesmuseum at Trier had a number of these stamps.

As Plate I, 2 shows, the stamp⁷ is retrograde and reads ARM[. A complete example has a small O inserted between the middle strokes of the letter M. On either side of the A there is a human figure. The die has been adequately cut in an impressionistic fashion, but does not carry the fuller details which an engraver would have added to a gem. At the beginning of the stamp on the extreme right the figure holds his left arm bent upwards. His right arm, obscured by a patch of clay, seems to hold the cross-piece of a staff which runs parallel to the first stroke of the A. The second figure, between A and R, holds both his arms upwards and has a band, like a fillet, running from the top of A, behind his head, and curving behind his right arm to run vertically to the ground. The rectangular panel has a serrated edge.

At my request Dr. W. Binsfeld, Director of the Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier, kindly sent me a rubber impression of a complete example, which tallies exactly with

⁷ *CIL XIII* 12648, no. 9. P. Steiner *Trierer Jahresberichte*, neue Folge, X-XI (1917-18) 25 fig. 22. These stamps were found on the site of the Imperial Baths at Trier and date to the late third or early fourth centuries under Diocletian and Constantine.

that from Chesters Museum. Dr. Simpson has suggested that the stamp might have been imported in Romano-British times in some exchange of goods with the Rhineland. I regard this as an extremely remote possibility, for one stamp does not make a consignment. The most reasonable solution seems to be that some visitor to Trier obtained an interesting stamp which was of small size and easily portable and added it to the Clayton Collection. It would have saved some of us trouble if he had added a note on the place of origin in ink on the back. The omission has given the occasion for writing this brief explanation.⁸ The object remains in store in Chesters Museum.

⁸ Due acknowledgement is here made to Dr. Grace Simpson, Honorary Curator to the Trustees of Chesters Museum, for sending the item for study, to Dr. W. Binsfeld for the impression of the parallel stamp at Trier and to the Photographic Unit of Newcastle upon Tyne University Library for taking the photograph.

