

V

A NEW INSCRIPTION OF JULIA DOMNA FROM NEWCASTLE

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A NEWLY discovered inscription from Newcastle, which expresses loyalty to the Dowager Empress Julia Domna, is another of the series set up by the Governor Julius Marcus in A.D. 213. Its wording presents problems of restoration, but sheds light on a similar stone from Netherby, now lost and known only in a MS source. In addition it gives us a garrison at Newcastle different from the *Cornovii* listed in the *Notitia*.

The Discovery (RBH)

The inscription which is the subject of this paper was found in 1979 during the seventh season of excavation of the northern part of the castle. The excavation was financed jointly by the City of Newcastle upon Tyne, the County of Tyne and Wear and the Department of the Environment, and was directed by Barbara Harbottle and Margaret Ellison.

Though not discovered in its original position there can be no doubt that the stone was part of the Roman fort of *Pons Aelius*, of which the excavated area is shown on fig. 1. This stone fort was not the first Roman activity on the site, and from the associated pottery it seems to have been built no earlier than the late second or early third century. The inscribed stone was found lying parallel with the north wall of the Headquarters Building on the road surface just outside its north entrance (A on fig. 1). It lay with its broken side uppermost, the base to the west, and the inscription on the north face. It was not clear whether it had been put here deliberately, perhaps as a threshold, nor whether its deposition had occurred in a late Roman or post-Roman context. A full report on the excavation will be prepared when work has been completed.

The Inscription (CMD)¹

The stone stands 1 m 16 cm in height by 58 cm in depth and a maximum of 33 cm across the surviving part of the face. The lowest 25 cm consists of a base and simple mouldings, which run round the front and side of the stone. The back is rough. The face of the stone contains the text, something less than half the line length of which survives. The top of the stone was originally flat, but had in antiquity been worn, especially at the surviving corners, by the sharpening of implements, or the like, and the front corner had been partly broken away, also in antiquity. A dowel hole is visible in the top surface, originally some 18 × 7 cm in size, but it has been re-cut to a funnel shape 24 cm across the top, no doubt to remove a metal dowel or its setting.

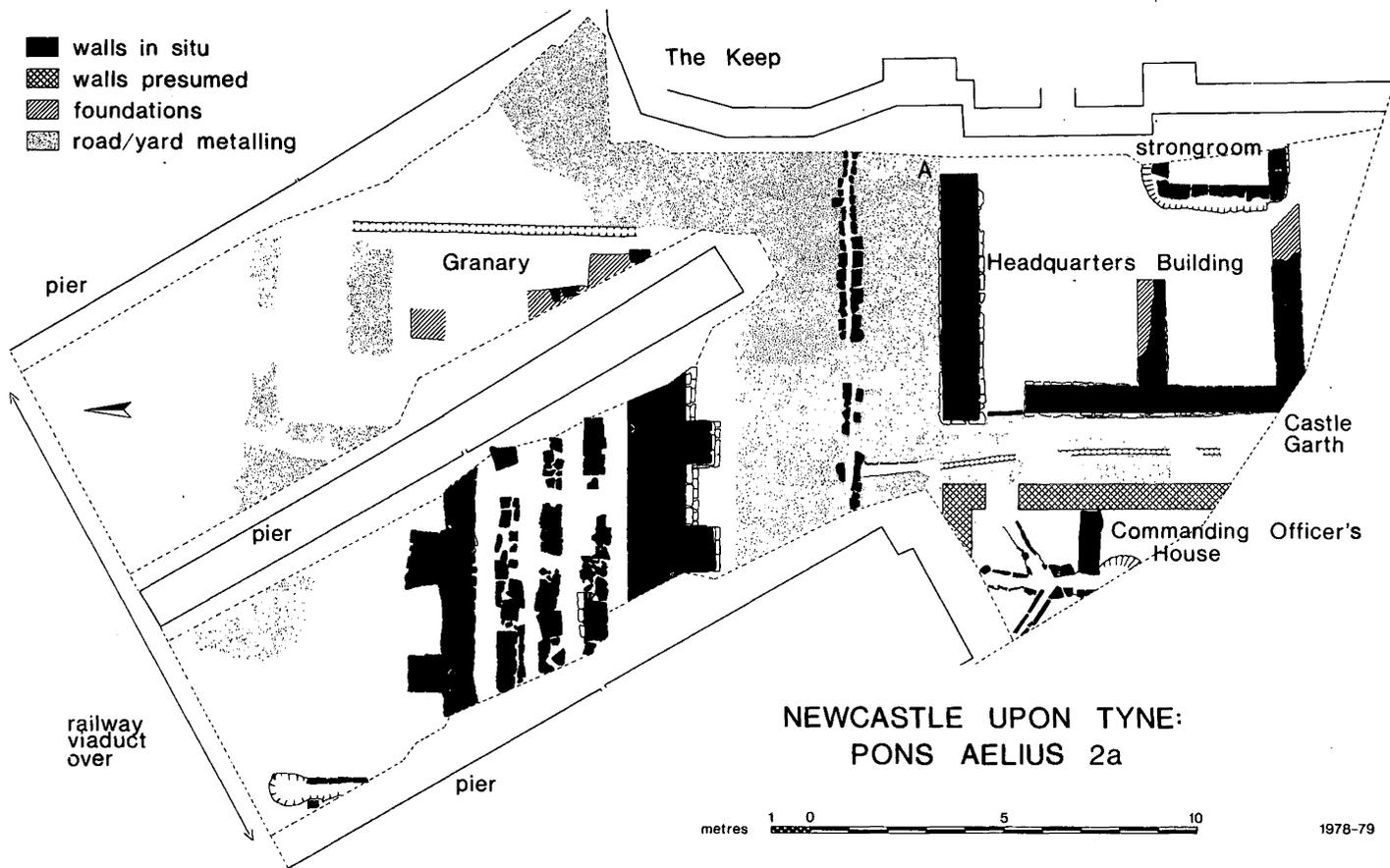


Fig. 1. *Pons Aelius*: the excavated area.

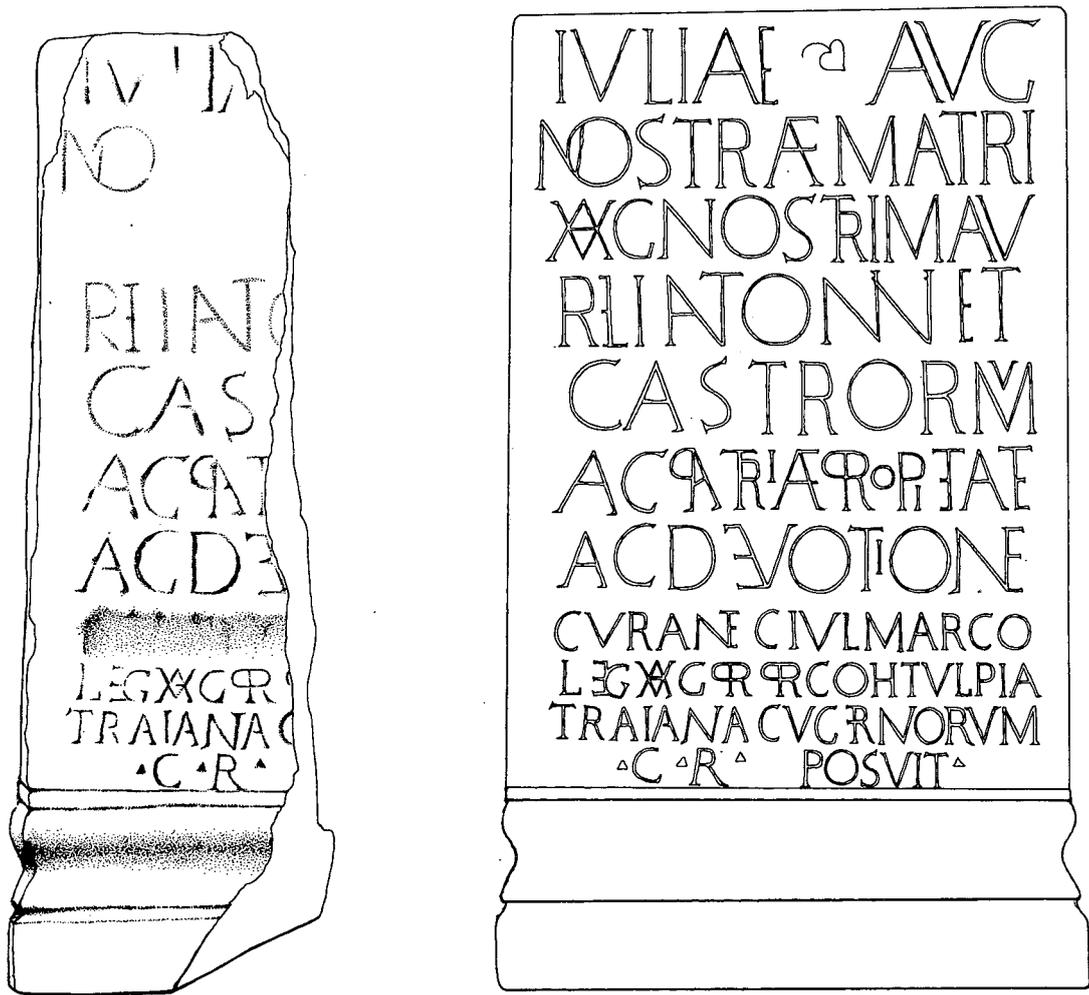
The inscription was well cut, but has suffered. The top edge of line 1 has been lost and almost nothing of lines 2–3 is now legible. Some of this damage may have been due to wear, after the stone ceased to stand upright. From line 4 the text is progressively easier to read, although line 8 was erased in antiquity. The lettering is of differing sizes: line 1 was over 9 cm in height, perhaps as much as 10; lines 2 to 4 and 6 to 7 are on average a little over 7 cm, but line 5 was larger, *c.* 8.25 cm. Line 8 was smaller than those above, but possibly not so small as lines 9–11, which are only 4 cm.

A few words of explanation are necessary for the suggested restoration (see fig. 2 and photo I). Here RIB 976, from Netherby, set up to the Dowager Empress Julia Domna is of the greatest importance, for although we have today only a copy of its text, and that presents certain difficulties, it is clearly a parallel dedication.

On our stone lines 9–10 set a reasonably uniform line length for the rest, showing the face to have been something like 70 cm wide originally. In line 1 *Iulia*[e] can be read, although the upper parts of the letters are now missing. After the death of Severus Julia is more usually styled Augusta on inscriptions than Domna. The O apparently opening line 2 might suggest *D[omnae]*, but it is unthinkable that the Empress's name would be split in such a manner. This O, therefore, presents a problem, as it is unlikely to start a word. However, the second line of the Netherby stone is recorded as *M. Matri Au.* Most editors have considered the initial M unnecessary, although Hübner (CIL vii, 963) did suggest *N(ostrae)* (?). *Iuliae Augustae Nostrae* is difficult to parallel, but faint traces of something survive in the left-hand margin of the new stone, which should not be dismissed merely as later damage. *DO* does not fit, but *NO* could, barbaric though it is, and the same slope of the right-hand upright of the N is visible here as can be seen in *Traiana* in line 10: *Nostrae* is therefore proposed. Such trespasses into the left hand margin of an inscription are rare in RIB, but an Antonine building stone from High Rochester (RIB 1276) shows an error of cutting which necessitated *HD* being placed in the margin of line 2, after an initial omission. It is suggested that the *N* was somehow omitted from the Newcastle stone, and then had to be cut into the space available. The rest of line 2, line 3 and line 4 are straightforward, giving Julia's title as mother of Caracalla.

The *CAS*[of line 5 is so bold and well spaced that even the abbreviation *castror* (*vide* ILS) would take up most of the line. Usually with this part of Julia's title both *senatus* and *patriae* occur, or are both omitted. But something like twice the available space would be required to fit *ac senatus* into line 5. Similarly, there is insufficient space to fit it into line 6 after *ac patriae*; as it is many ligatures are necessary to accommodate *pro pietate* in the line. Hence the suggestion that *castrorum ac patriae* occurs, but *ac senatus* is omitted.

As is discussed below, these stones are set up to express loyalty to Caracalla. The full expression of this, as found at Whitley Castle (1202) and Risingham (1235), and, in a fragmentary state, at Chesterholm (1705), is *pro pietate ac devotione communi*—out of their common loyalty and devotion. In all three cases this is given in full, but the spacing of the remaining letters of line 7 of the Newcastle stone suggests that some omission has been made in the text. Netherby supports this: as recorded it reads *pro devotione num(ini) eius*—out of devotion to his *numen* (but see below). This is



IVLIA
 NO
 RIINT
 CAS
 ACRI
 ACDE
 LEGXGR
 TRAIANA
 C R

IVLIAE AVC
 NOSTRAMATRI
 XGNOSTRIMAV
 RLINTONNET
 CASTRORM
 ACRIAPORTAE
 ACDEVOTIONE
 CVRANE CIVLMARCO
 LEGXGRRCOHTVLP
 TRAIANA CVGRNORVM
 C R POSVIT

0 50 100 cms

Fig. 2. A new Inscription from Newcastle: *left*, as found; *right*, restored.



Photograph of the new inscription from Newcastle

expanded in RIB to the full formula, by the addition of two conjectural lines, but if the copyist was correct, or even only partly correct, we have a variation from the full formula, and it is noteworthy that *communi* appears to have been omitted from both stones.

Line 8 restores easily with *curante* and *G. Iul(io) Marco*. In lines 9 and 10 enough of the Unit's title survives to allow reconstruction. As *Traiana* is given in full, *Ulpia* and *Cugernorum* are unlikely to have been shortened, while *c R* is set back and would match *posuit*, also used at Netherby. The full text would now read:

Iulia [e]  Aug(ustae)
 Nō[straē] matri
 [Aug(usti) Nōsfrī M(arcī) Au]
 rēli Antō[nīni] et
 cas[trorum]
 ac pāt[riāe] p̄o piētātē
 ac dēv[otiōnē]
 [curantē G(aio) Iul(io) Marco
 Lēg(ato) Aug(usti) p̄r(o) p̄r(aetore)] Coh(ors) I Ulpia
 Traiana C[ugērnorum
 Δc(ivium) ΔR(omanorum) Δ[posuit] Δ

For Julia Augusta,
 our own, Mother of our
 Emperor Marcus Aurelius
 Antoninus, and of the
 Army and the Country,
 out of loyalty and
 devotion, under the charge
 of Gaius Julius Marcus,
 the Emperor's propraetorian
 legate, the First Cohort of
 Trajan's Own Cugerni, Roman
 citizens, set this up.

The new stone is a most welcome addition to our meagre knowledge of Roman Newcastle, but it also has a wider importance. It is clearly one of a series of dedications first noted by Professor Eric Birley almost 40 years ago,² set up by units of the army in Britain in the year A.D. 213, to record their loyalty to the Emperor Caracalla. The story is brief: Caracalla and his brother Geta were already co-Emperors with their father Septimius Severus when he died at York on 24th February 211.³ Caracalla at once seized effective control, came to terms quickly with the Northern Barbarians, abandoning forts and withdrawing from their territory. The royal family then returned to Rome with Severus's ashes, and joint rule should have followed. But by late February 212 Caracalla had succeeded in murdering Geta, to be followed soon by many of those who had favoured joint rule. Some units, at least, protested that they had taken an oath of loyalty to both Emperors: Legio II Parthica, we are told, shut the gates of their fortress at Albano against Caracalla for a long time, and it seems that the British army also showed loyalty to Geta. Whether the Governor of Lower Britain, Julius Marcus, was himself suspected of disloyalty to Caracalla we do not know, but a series of inscriptions protesting loyalty and bearing his name was set up in the course of 213 at Old Penrith (RIB 928), Whitley Castle (RIB 1202), Chesterholm (RIB 1705), Netherby (RIB 976), Risingham (RIB 1235), High Rochester (RIB 1278) and, we know now, Newcastle. Other fragments at Carrawburgh (RIB 1551), Great Chesters (RIB 1741) and from somewhere in Cumbria (RIB 1018) may have come from similar inscriptions. The erasure of Marcus' name from most of these suggests that he was not altogether successful in satisfying Caracalla, and Professor Birley has suggested that a little later troops were brought over from the Two Germanies to stiffen British support for Caracalla.⁴ The same Governor's name appears on a normal, if

fragmentary, building inscription from Old Carlisle (RIB 905) also dated to 213, a milestone from near Milecastle 17 on the Wall (RIB 2298) and possibly two further stones from Netherby (RIB 977) and Whitley Castle (RIB 1205).⁵

Of the stones declaring loyalty, the majority are to Caracalla, but two bear the name of Julia. One, from Risingham, repeats the formula for both the Emperor and his mother, the other, the Netherby stone, is to the Dowager Empress alone. Camden called it an altar and RIB suggests that it "was probably the jamb of a doorway, perhaps the sacellum of the headquarters building". The new inscription makes it much more likely that it, too, was a statue base, but it also allows further modifications to be suggested: Hübner's *N(ostrae) Matri Au[g(usti)]* now has support, as do variations to the full text, which could well have been no longer than the *pro devotione num(ini) eius* recorded. *Numini eius* was apparently omitted from the Newcastle stone, but a dedication to Julia from the *principia* of the fort at Murrhardt, on the outer German *limes* (CIL xiii 6531), ends with *devota numini eius*. The Netherby text, as restored in RIB, is taken to be an act of devotion to Caracalla's *numen* (there translated as Deity), and the Emperor is generally seen as the object of all of these affirmations of loyalty. But the unit at Murrhardt is clearly devoting itself to *Julia's numen*, and so are the Netherby and Newcastle units. This must also apply at Risingham, where the full formula *pro pietate ac devotione communi* is applied to Julia, as to Caracalla. But affirmations of devotion to Julia seem to precede the death of Severus. An altar from Gross Krotzenburg, on the Main (CIL xiii 7417), was dedicated for the safety, victory and return of Severus, Caracalla and Geta, Augusti, and Julia Domna Augusta, by Q. Aiadius Modestus, legate of Upper Germany. The bottom of the altar is missing, but the text appears to end *num(ini) d[evot(us) eor(um)]*. A second inscription, from Lambaesis (CIL viii 18254), is also fragmentary but it was apparently set up by the well-known legate of Numidia, Q. Anicius Faustus, for the health and safety of Severus, Julia and their sons and it ends *numini] eorum devotus*.⁶

Two interpretations of the British dedications seem possible. Caracalla had much to gain by a reconciliation with his mother: as she was the surviving member of the family most closely connected with Severus, the suggestion of co-rule, even if ambiguous, could only have been beneficial to the unpopular and mistrusted Emperor, branded a fratricide. But the British inscriptions appear within only a year and a half of Geta's brutal and bloody murder in his mother's arms,⁷ and was this time enough for a reconciliation? Could it be that some units of the British and German armies professed their devotion to Julia out of continued dislike of Caracalla (and in so doing were, perhaps, responsible for the discrediting of Gaius Julius Marcus)?

Finally, the Governor's name on the Netherby stone is recorded as *Marcello*. RIB restores this as *Marco leg(ato)*, but Professor Birley, in another paper,⁸ suggested that the governor may, in fact, have been a second Ulpian Marcellus. The close parallel of the Netherby and Newcastle stones, with the latter's dedication by Julius Marcus, now makes this extremely unlikely.

In addition, the stone adds something to our knowledge of the fort at Newcastle, and its garrisons. The bulk of the pottery so far recovered from the site indicates that the fort is unlikely to have been earlier than the late second century in date. This inscription

shows that a quingenary peditate cohort was in garrison by A.D. 213, and gives its name. If the fort was built for this unit, it must have been a small one of *c.* 3 acres in size, or a little more, which its layout tends to confirm. *Cohors I Ulpia Traiana Cugernorum* was hitherto attested on the Wall only by one small altar, but as this was set up to the Goddess Coventina at Carrawburgh (RIB 1524), it does not necessarily mean that the cohort was in garrison at that fort.

The sum of our previous knowledge of the unit⁹ is that it was originally raised in the lower Rhineland (modern Holland); it was in Britain by January A.D. 103 (CIL xvi 48), but in that year had neither its royal title nor its Roman citizenship. By July 122 (CIL xvi 69) it had won both. These could have been awarded by Trajan for valour in the Second Dacian War, or perhaps in Britain, if there really was fighting *c.* A.D. 105 when various northern forts were given up. Or, possibly, Roman citizenship was won early in Hadrian's reign when we know that there was trouble and an *expeditio Britannica* took place.¹⁰ Where the unit was under Hadrian we do not know, but early in the reign of Pius (A.D. 139–44), it was recorded on a milestone found near Ingliston.¹¹ The cohort was possibly at Carrawburgh in Wall Period 1B (*c.* 163–80), as has already been noted. The new inscription tells us that in the early part of the third century, at least, the Cugerni were at Newcastle, but the *Notitia Dignitatum* gives the later garrison there as the First Cohort of Cornovii, a unit about which we know virtually nothing. Newcastle, then, becomes one of the very small number of Wall forts whose third-century garrison is different from that given in the *Notitia*. South Shields (really part of the Wall system, if not actually on its line), Burgh-by-Sands and Carvoran are the others. Such alterations to garrisons should perhaps make us wonder whether there was not the same positive break in military occupation at these Wall sites that Professor John Mann has argued to have occurred in the forts south of the Wall during the long peace of the third century, when units seem to have been transferred, or even disbanded.¹²

NOTES

¹ The stone has been placed on indefinite loan by the City of Newcastle upon Tyne in the Museum of Antiquities, where it bears the accession no. 1980.4. It will be published in "Roman Britain in 1979" in *Britannia* xi (1980). CMD wishes to thank Mr. R. P. Wright, Dr. R. S. O. Tomlin and Professor J. C. Mann for discussing its restoration with him, Mrs. Miriam Daniels for the drawing of the altar and Mr. G. Finch for the photograph.

² A New Inscription from Chesterholm", *AA*⁴, xi (1934), 127 f.

³ Dio, LXXVII 1–6, *Scriptores... Historiae Augustae*, Severus XIX 1, XXI 6–9, Caracalla II–IV, Geta VI–VII, Herodian, III 15 4 f, IV 1–6. In addition, RIB 1054, from South Shields, an altar dedicated to the Preserving Gods for the welfare of

both Augusti... safe return, in fulfilment of a vow, shows British loyalty to both Emperors.

⁴ "Troops from the Two Germanies in Roman Britain", *Epigraphische Studien* 4 (1967), 103 f.

⁵ A. R. Birley "The Roman Governors of Britain", *Epigraphische Studien* 4 (1967), 87.

⁶ Another stone, from Benevento (ILS 6488) dedicated to Julia and Severus by the Colonia ends *devota maiestati Augg.*

⁷ Dio LXXVII, 2.

⁸ "The Roman Fort at Netherby", *CW*², liii (1953), 21.

⁹ For a previous summary see E. Birley "The Beaumont Inscription, the *Notitia Dignitatum*, and the Garrison of Hadrian's Wall", *CW*², xxxix (1939), 214.

¹⁰ *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Hadrian V. 2; ILS 2726.

¹¹ RIB 2313. Now the upper part of this milestone has been reunited, it is clear that it refers to Pius' reign, either his second consulship of A.D. 139;

or his third of 140–4 (as per *Britannia* IV (1973), 336–7).

¹² "The Northern Frontier after A.D. 369", *Glasgow Archaeological Journal* 3 (1974), 34 f.

