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R. W. DAVIES

Cohors I Cugernorum

It is an unfortunate fact that literary sources for major events in the history of provinces are often missing or fragmentary or of dubious value. Consequently, scholars turn to other evidence, such as epigraphy, to throw light on such periods. A good example of such Stygian gloom is the history of Roman Britain from the recall of Agricola in 84 to the construction of Hadrian's Wall in 122. Hence the careers of equestrian officers and the titles of units can give vital information. From such evidence ERIC BIRLEY has suggested that there was a major war in Britain in Trajan's reign.¹ He argued that C. Julius Karus as *praefectus cohortis II Asturum* won unparalleled decorations in this *bellum Britannicum*.² However, new evidence now makes it appear that Karus was in Britain late in Domitian's reign³ and that he was generously rewarded for the role he played in the downfall of the 'treacherous' governor, Sallustius Lucullus, in the period 89–96.⁴

BIRLEY also pointed out that the British diploma of 103 includes *cohors I Cugernorum* but that of 122 describes the unit as *cohors I Ulpia Traiana Cugernorum civium Romanorum*.⁵ He argued that at some time in the period 103–117 the unit received en bloc Roman citizenship and two imperial titles for distinguished service in an otherwise unrecorded British War.⁶ However, it should be noted that the other 49 of the 50 units attested in the 122 diploma did not receive decorations in this period nor did several others known to have been in the province then but which did not have men to be discharged in that year; consequently, it seems unlikely that there could have been a major British War then. It might, however, be possible that the imperial titles were awarded by Trajan and the citizenship by Hadrian in the troubled times on his accession;⁷ however, critical analysis of the

¹ E. BIRLEY, *Roman Britain and the Roman Army*, 1961, 20–30, especially 22–24.

² AE 1951, 88.

³ AE 1951, 210; 1957, 133. Cf. S. FRERE, *Britannia, A History of Roman Britain*, 1967, 124; BJ 170, 1970, 181.

⁴ Suetonius, Dom. 10; R. W. DAVIES, *Military Decorations and the British War*, *Acta Classica* 1976, forthcoming.

⁵ CIL XVI 48 and 69. On the unit cf. RE 4 (1901) 276–277 (CICHORIUS) and on the Cugerni RE 4 (1901) 741 (IHM).

⁶ BIRLEY, o. c. 24.

⁷ SHA, Hadr. 5 and 11; Fronto, *de Bello Parthico* 2; cf. BIRLEY, o. c. 25–28.

evidence suggests that the military campaigns and losses then have been considerably exaggerated; certainly, *legio IX Hispana* was not then destroyed in Britain, as commonly supposed.⁸

H.-G. PFLAUM has recently suggested a different interpretation of the history of *cohors I Cugernorum*.⁹ He published a corrected reading of a new inscription from Mursa in Pannonia of a dedication by a man who held the post of *praef(ectus) coh(ortis) I Ulp(iae) Tra(ianae) Cu[g(ernorum)]*. He argued that the unit was raised by Trajan and hence bore his names; following a suggestion by GÉZA ALFÖLDY, he dated the creation of the unit to the same time as the foundation of the new colony at Xanten (*Colonia Ulpia Traiana*), that is to some time in the period 98–107.¹⁰

However, there are objections to this theory. Trajan raised two new legions (*XXX Ulpia* and *II Traiana*); if each legion, the highest type of unit of the *militia provincialis*, was allowed only one title derived from the names of the emperor who raised them, why should a quingenary cohort, the lowest form of unit, be given both? Why should it be on an par with a *colonia*? The 103 diploma shows that the unit existed for a time at least in Trajan's reign without these titles.¹¹ No other unit in the Roman army was awarded two imperial titles by Trajan,¹² so why should he confer so high an honour on an ordinary quingenary cohort?¹³

However, it is possible to suggest a history of *cohors I Cugernorum* in complete accordance with the known evidence and which seems to fit the events better. The unit had been raised and transferred to Britain by 103 at latest and quite possibly some considerable time earlier.¹⁴ Its title was simply *cohors I Cugernorum*, as the

⁸ R. W. DAVIES, *Fighting and Frontiers in the North of Roman Britain*, in: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. H. TEMPORINI, II 12, 1977.

⁹ H.-G. PFLAUM, *Cohors I Flavia Bessorum et cohors I Ulpia Traiana Cugernorum*, *Chiron* 4, 1974, 453–456. Cf. G. ALFÖLDY, *Die Hilfstruppen der römischen Provinz Germania Inferior*, 1968, 84.

¹⁰ For the date H. v. PETRIKOVITS, *Das römische Rheinland*, 1960, 96; in J. E. BOGAERS und C. B. RÜGER, *Der Niedergermanische Limes*, 1974, 14, he dates it «zwischen 98 und 103/104».

¹¹ The clerk correctly assigned titles to the other units and so the accidental omission of *Ulpia Traiana civium Romanorum* is unlikely; the titles are correctly given on CIL XVI 70 dated 124.

¹² Cf. RE 4 (1901) 346. L. ROSSI, *Trajan's Column and the Dacian Wars*, 1971, 64–66, lists all units known or assumed to have taken part; none has the titles *Ulpia Traiana*; even the highly decorated *cohors I Brittonum* received only one imperial title (see below, note 38).

¹³ R. P. WRIGHT has read a hitherto unattested *cohors I Ulpia civium Romanorum* in CIL XVI 70 (JRS 54, 1964, 150–151). As the unit lacks an ethnic noun or adjective, it (and *II*) must be cohorts raised by Trajan from citizens and not units on which citizenship was subsequently conferred.

¹⁴ There is very little epigraphic evidence for British units before the turn of the century. IHM suggested that *cohors I Cugernorum* was raised after the revolt of Civilis; cf. note 5 and ALFÖLDY, o. c. 45–48.

diploma records. Subsequently, it was transferred for one of the two major wars of Trajan's reign, the Second Dacian and the Parthian. In this fighting the unit distinguished itself and was honoured by the emperor. At the conclusion of the campaign it was sent back to Britain, where the 122 diploma records it with its new honours; the date would be either 110, when many of the auxiliary units of the expeditionary army are known to have returned to their own provinces,¹⁵ or 117, when Hadrian abandoned Trajan's new eastern provinces.¹⁶ The new inscription from Mursa strongly points to the unit being transferred temporarily to the Danube front for the Second Dacian War; this records the unit with its two imperial titles, but not the en bloc citizenship; it must remain a possibility that the cohort received its honours for more than one action.¹⁷

There is a certain amount of circumstantial evidence, which suggests that other units of the *exercitus Britannicus* were transferred to take part in Trajan's major wars. T. Flavius Crescens, *equus alae Tampianae vexillationis Britannicae*, died at Carnuntum;¹⁸ the diplomas of 103 and 122 show that this *ala* was in those years stationed in Britain; the fact that his tombstone specifies that he was part of the British army strongly suggests that his unit was there for the Second Dacian War. The latter diploma records the honourable discharge granted to Gemellus, son of Breucus, a *sesquiplicarius* of the *ala Tampiana*, who was a Pannonian; he surely joined the *ala*, presumably by transfer, during its stay on the Danube for Trajan's Second Dacian War; it is to be noted that Gemellus returned to his native Pannonia, where the diploma was found at Brigetio (Ó-Szöny), though such returns are unusual.¹⁹ Presumably other units, including *cohors I Cugernorum*, formed part of the *vexillatio Britannica*; this will have included a detachment of *legio XX Valeria Victrix*, as its name is recorded in Trajan's Forum.²⁰

There is also evidence to suggest that units may have been transferred temporarily from Britain, not as combat troops, but to act as a reserve to release other units.²¹ Recent finds from Nijmegen (Noviomagus) and Aachen (Aquae Granni)

¹⁵ A. Mócsy, *Pannonia and Upper Moesia*, 1974, 96. Possibly it stayed on the Danube until the Parthian War in 114; *ibid.*

¹⁶ SHA, Hadr. 5.

¹⁷ There is, unfortunately, a lacuna.

¹⁸ CIL III 4466 = ILS 2515. Cf. R. SAXER, *Untersuchungen zu den Vexillationen des römischen Kaiserheeres von Augustus bis Diokletian*, 1967, 24–25, no. 42.

¹⁹ CIL XVI 69; cf. *Britannia* 4, 1973, 199. 202. For accessions and transfers to a unit's strength in the Dacian War note the *pridianum* of *cohors I Hispanorum veterana* in 105(?); R. O. FINK, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus*, 1971, no. 63, and cf. no. 64 and index s. v. *transfere*.

²⁰ ROSSI, o. c. 93.

²¹ *Legio II Adiutrix* was regularly used as an expeditionary unit and temporarily replaced at Aquincum by *IV Flavia*; Mócsy, o. c. 99. *Legio II Augusta* sent caretaker detachments to Corbridge and the abandoned Hadrian's Wall forts c. 140 (RIB 1147. 1148. 1330. 1582. 1583; cf. 1460 and 1461 for Sixth).

strongly suggest that *legio IX Hispana* was temporarily posted to Nijmegen to guard the Lower Rhine while the original garrison, *legio X Gemina*, was transferred as part of the large-scale troop movements for Trajan's campaigns.²² Nijmegen has also produced considerable tile evidence for a *vexillatio Britannica* in an early second century context.²³ Perhaps the Ninth Legion guarded the Lower Rhine during the Parthian Campaigns, the British Detachments during the Dacian.²⁴ This task force of the British Army, probably detachments of the three legions plus auxiliary units, included the *ala Vocontiorum*.²⁵ A statue-base found in Holland at Hemmen was dedicated by Simplicius Super, *decurio alae Vocontiorum exercituus Britannici*.²⁶ It is very tempting to suppose that -gadunus, whose *origo* was Colonia Ulpia Traiana, who died as an *emeritus* of the *ala Petriana* at Old Penrith (Voreda) joined his *ala* while it was in Lower Germany at this time.²⁷ On a potsherd from the military tileries and potteries at Holdeurn near Nijmegen is a graffito of a COH·II, possibly a Second Cohort drawn from the British Army.²⁸

The *ala Petriana* may well have actually served in Trajan's wars; the British diploma of 98 shows that by then it had been awarded en bloc Roman citizenship.²⁹ The career inscription of C. Camurius Clemens records that he was *praefectus alae Petrianae milliariae civium Romanorum bis torquatae*; PFLAUM has dated this post to the later years of Trajan's reign.³⁰ Trajan's Second Dacian War and even his Parthian Campaigns would be ideal occasions for the *ala* to have been awarded the decoration of *torques* twice and also to have been selected as the *ala* of the British forces to be enlarged to become the province's new and only élite *ala milliaria*.³¹ It is not impossible that the *ala Petriana* was also awarded the title

²² J. E. BOGAERS, Die Besatzungstruppen des Legionslagers von Nijmegen im 2. Jahrhundert nach Christus, Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms, 1967, 54–76, especially 63–64. H. NESSELHAUF und H. v. PETRIKOVITS, Ein Weihaltar für Apollo aus Aachen-Burtscheid, BJ 167, 1967, 268–279. AE 1968, 323. DAVIES, l. c. (note 8).

²³ BOGAERS, l. c. 64–65; SAXER, o. c. 86, no. 255.

²⁴ Cf. note 8. Much hinges on whether *legio X Gemina* left in 104 or 114; cf. BOGAERS & RÜGER, o. c. 76–80; MÓCSY, o. c. 92; the division of Pannonia c. 103 will have caused the rearrangement of troop dispositions; cf. MÓCSY, o. c. 103–6.

²⁵ BOGAERS, l. c. 64–68.

²⁶ CIL XIII 8805 = ILS 2536.

²⁷ RIB 935 and apparatus; for the name cf. P. STUART and J. E. BOGAERS, in: Deae Nehaleniæ, 1971, no. 31.

²⁸ Unpublished; I owe this and the previous reference to the kindness of JULES BOGAERS.

²⁹ CIL XVI 43. Presumably awarded after c. 87, the earliest date for the occupation of Corbridge I when the Flavianus tombstone (RIB 1172) shows the unit not yet in possession of en bloc citizenship.

³⁰ CIL XI 5669 = ILS 2728+add; H.-G. PFLAUM, Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain, 1960–1, 183–184, no. 87; he must have been prefect c. 110–113, conceivably slightly later.

³¹ Cf. E. BIRLEY, Alae and Cohortes Milliariae, Corolla memoriae Erich Swoboda dedicata, 1966, 54–67, especially 56.

Augusta for its exploits under Trajan.³² It is perhaps also possible that the *ala Classiana*, attested in Britain by the diplomas of 105 and 122, also formed part of the *vexillatio Britannica*, receiving some or even all of its titles of honour of *invicta bis torquata* from Trajan.³³ Britain had a very large provincial garrison and was always likely to be called upon to provide troops for service in other provinces, especially for major campaigns,³⁴ or even for routine strengthening of other forces.³⁵ The Cugerni were from the Lower Rhine and quite possibly, like their neighbours the Batavi, were specialists in amphibious crossings and combat.³⁶ Trajan drew heavily from many different provinces for his expeditionary army for the Dacian and Parthian campaigns.³⁷

In short, there seems very little likelihood that *cohors I Cugernorum* could have earned its awards in Britain. However, Trajan's Second Dacian and Parthian Wars provided the ideal opportunity for him to be generous and for the cohort to earn its unique distinction. Trajan in 106, for example, awarded *cohors I Brittonum milliaria* the titles *Ulpia torquata pia fidelis*, and to the men who *pie et fideliter expeditione Dacica ante emerita stipendia civitatem Romanam dedit*.³⁸ In 114 he also gave the crew of the quadrireme 'Ops' en bloc citizenship, presumably because they had saved his life in a storm at sea.³⁹ Ti. Claudius Maximus, an *explorator*,

³² The title is not given on the career inscription of Clemens (see note 30) but appears on RIB 957 from Carlisle, from where the unit moved c. 124.

³³ CIL XI 6033; cf. ALFÖLDY, o. c. 17–18.

³⁴ Cf. SAXER o. c. 138 s. v. Britannia. Nero's eastern campaign – *legio XIV Gemina*, 8 Batavian cohorts; civil wars – 8,000 legionaries and auxiliaries (*alae Indiana* and *Britannica*, *cohortes Canninefatium* and *I Thracum?*); Domitian's Chattan campaigns – detachments of all four legions, perhaps most heavily from *IX Hispana*; Domitian's Dacian campaigns – *legio II Adiutrix* plus *auxilia*; Hadrian's Jewish War – vexillation of *legio XX Valeria Victrix* and of *cohors I Hispanorum milliaria* (cf. Trans. Cumberland & Westmorland Ant. & Arch. Soc. 77, 1977, forthcoming); Pius's Mauretanian War – *misso cum exercitu* (AE 1960, 28); Commodus's campaign against the Armorici – legionary vexillations (ILS 2770+add); Caracalla's German campaign – detachment of *legio II Augusta* (RIB 369); Gallienus's campaigns against Franks and Alamanni – detachments of *II Augusta* and *XX Valeria Victrix*; Gallienus's civil war – legionaries and auxiliaries; third century campaigns – most of auxiliary units on hinterland of Hadrian's Wall (Glasgow Archaeological Journal 3, 1974, 38–39).

³⁵ E. g. the splitting of milliary cohorts and the sending of a vexillation to another province; BIRLEY, l. c. (note 31) 61; SAXER, o. c. 28–32. At least four of the seven British milliary cohorts seem to have sent a detachment at one time or another.

³⁶ See above, notes 5 and 35. For the sending of specialist troops to the Danube, Mócsy, o. c. 194–195.

³⁷ E. g. CIL XVI 164: *vexillatio equitum ex Syria* for Second Dacian War; CIL XVI 75: *vexillatio equitum Illyricorum* for Dacia; CIL VI 32933 = ILS 2723: *praefectio vexillationum equitum Moesiae Inferioris et Daciae eunti in expeditione Parthica*. Cf. SAXER, o. c. 25–28; ROSSI, o. c. 92–97; H. M. D. Parker, *The Roman Legions*, 1961, 156–160; Mócsy, o. c. 91–99; CIL XVI 39 with 46. 160. 163. 164.

³⁸ CIL XVI 160 and 163.

³⁹ CIL XVI 60; C. G. STARR, *The Roman Imperial Navy*², 1960, 81. 187.

was decorated by Trajan twice in the Dacian and once in the Parthian Wars with *torques et armillae* and also commissioned for capturing Decebalus.⁴⁰ It is surely in some such circumstance that Trajan made his unique distinction on the cohort. Such high honours are most understandable when conferred by the emperor in person in the field.⁴¹

Surprisingly, the cohort has left little trace of itself in Britain and is attested on only a couple of inscriptions. Nevertheless, these are both of considerable interest. One was found in the well of the shrine of Coventina at Carrawburgh (Brocolitia):⁴²

Deae Co-
ventine
coh(orti) I Cube-
⁴ *rnorum*
Aur(elius) Camp-
ester
v(otum) p(osuit) l(aeto) a(nimo)

The use of the dative case is most unusual and the phrasing suggests that it is not a personal dedication by an officer from another unit visiting the shrine.⁴³ As BIRLEY comments:⁴⁴ «One inscription seems to describe the goddess as the patroness of *coh. I Cugernorum*; it remains to be learnt whether her temple was first erected by that cohort.» It is hard to parallel such a dedication in Britain. The date is perhaps late second century, as BIRLEY indicates.⁴⁵

The other inscription is a milestone found at Ingliston in Midlothian and is dated to the period 140–44:⁴⁶

[*Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) T(ito)*]
[*Ael(io) Hadr(iano) Anto-*
nino Aug(usto) Pio
⁴ *p(atri) p(atriciae) co(n)s(uli) [I]II*

⁴⁰ AE 1969–70, 583.

⁴¹ The scenes on Trajan's Column and passages in Pliny's Panegyric make it clear that Trajan took an active part in the campaigning.

⁴² RIB 1524. The transcript omits the suprascript bar over the numeral.

⁴³ As in RIB 1523.

⁴⁴ E. BIRLEY, *Research on Hadrian's Wall*, 1961, 177.

⁴⁵ The fort was built and presumably occupied by the rump of *cohors I Tungrorum* c. 130; abandoned c. 140; perhaps reoccupied by *cohors I Aquitanorum* c. 155 (which was soon posted to Brough-on-Noe) and replaced for rest of second century by *cohors I Cugernorum*; in third and fourth centuries *cohors I Batavorum* was in garrison. *Epigraphische Studien* 4, 1967, 108–111; BIRLEY, *o. c.* (note 44) 175; *Archaeologia Aeliana* 4th series 50, 1972, 81–144, especially 81–84.

⁴⁶ RIB 2313, corrected by *Britannia* 4, 1973, 336–337 (b).

[[.....]]
 [[.....]]
 co]b(ors) I Cugernor(um)
 8 Trī]monti(o) m(ilia) p(assuum)
 [..]

There are several points of interest about this milestone. It is the only one in Britain set up by an auxiliary unit. It confirms epigraphically the archaeological evidence that Newstead was the key site in the Antonine reoccupation of Scotland.⁴⁷ It also had an unusual item in lines 5 and 6; as R. P. WRIGHT notes: «The deletion can perhaps be interpreted as the names and style of a governor whose memory was later condemned.» The names of governors are not attested on British milestones before the third century;⁴⁸ consequently, the governor must have been very distinguished to have his name on a milestone this early. The governor for most, if not all, of these years was Q. Lollius Urbicus.⁴⁹ Capitolinus records that Lollius was the governor who waged the successful war and built the new turf wall, for which events Pius took the only acclamation of imperator of his entire reign.⁵⁰ Lollius's name occurs on five inscriptions, two at Corbridge dated 139 and 140, one at High Rochester, and two at Balmuildy; his name survives intact on all.⁵¹ He was certainly not subsequently damned; he was in fact awarded the post of *praefectus urbi*, perhaps the most distinguished and prestigious of all senatorial offices, and a clear indication of the full approval that Pius had of him and his acts in Britain; no other governor of Britain ever received this coveted office.⁵² Unless one assumes that some other governor replaced him late in this period and that he was subsequently damned,⁵³ the governor must be Lollius; there is no evidence to suggest that any senior consular was damned and in the reign of Pius such an idea seems very improbable. Yet why should the names *and rank* of Lollius have been deleted?⁵⁴

It is notable that while the name of Platorius Nepos, the governor responsible for the construction of Hadrian's Wall, apparently appears twice on each milecastle and on every structure in the forts,⁵⁵ that of Lollius Urbicus does not occur on any

⁴⁷ FRERE, o. c. 151.

⁴⁸ RIB 2298 (213); RIB 2299 and 2306 (223).

⁴⁹ If it was Pius's second consulship, then the governor must have been Lollius.

⁵⁰ SHA, Pius 5; cf. BIRLEY, o. c. (note 1) 32.

⁵¹ RIB 1147. 1148. 1276. 2191. 2192.

⁵² He was also *proconsul Africae* and a *fetialis*, further indications that he was *persona grata*.

⁵³ Quite possibly the successor was Papirius Aelianus, attested in 146, and certainly not damned; CIL XVI 93; cf. II 2075 and 2078; III 1446.

⁵⁴ The names but not the rank of the governor Julius Marcus were deleted on RIB 1202. 1235. 1265 after his damnation; the same happened to the Elder Gordian on RIB 590 and 1279 subsequently on his death.

⁵⁵ E. g. RIB 1340. 1427. 1634. 1637. 1638. 1666. 1702. 1935.

of a score of magnificent distance-slabs from the Antonine Wall.⁵⁶ His name does not feature either on the building inscriptions set up by auxiliary units at the forts of Rough Castle, Castlecary, or Bar Hill.⁵⁷ It does, however, appear on two at Balmuildy, set up by *legio II Augusta*; however, this fort is exceptional in that it is built of stone, with projecting stone wing-walls, and is clearly earlier than the Antonine Wall.⁵⁸ The panegyric delivered by Fronto to honour Antoninus Pius in 143 makes it quite clear that all the glory for the brilliant exploits in Britain was to go to the emperor and to the emperor alone.⁵⁹ It would make good sense to suppose that a directive was issued that only the name of the emperor was to appear on the Antonine Wall; the legionaries at Balmuildy had already erected their inscriptions (one was over the north gate), which consequently had to be left in position; the governor's name did not appear on the distance-slabs or at any of the other forts. *Cohors I Cugernorum*, being away from the Wall constructing communications systems, did not hear of the instructions until the milestone had already been inscribed; once the mistake was discovered, it was corrected simply and quickly and the name and post of the governor were both erased. Consequently, they should both be restored here; the spacing suggests that the most likely wording was:⁶⁰

Q.LOL.VRBICO
LEG.AVG.PR.PR.

These inscriptions, though few in number, are none the less of considerable value. There can be few units in the Roman army that present so briefly so much of interest as *cohors I Cugernorum*.

⁵⁶ G. MACDONALD, *The Roman Wall in Scotland*², 1934, 362–390; *Britannia* 1, 1970, 309–310, no. 19, pls. XVIII and XXXVIII = AE 1971, 225.

⁵⁷ RIB 2145. 3155. 2170.

⁵⁸ RIB 2191 and 2192. MACDONALD, o. c. 162–164. 312–324, figs. 7 and 44, pl. LVII; *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scotland*. 102, 1974, 111.

⁵⁹ *Pan. Lat. Vet.* 8 (5) 14; see note 8.

⁶⁰ For the abbreviation of the names RIB 1276; perhaps preceded by *sub* (cf. RIB 1276, 1291–2) or *cur(ante)* (cf. RIB 2299, 2306), although the Welton milestone has the ablative absolute (RIB 2298).