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R. W. DAVIES

The *ala I Asturum* in Roman Britain*

An inscription, now unfortunately lost, from Benwell (Condercum) on Hadrian's Wall contains several points of interest.¹ The dedication was in a central plaque, which was held on either side by a winged victory, although the left side is rather weathered. Dr. GEORGE DAVENPORT² provided a good reading and JOHN HORSLEY³ an excellent drawing which, with the alteration of only one letter,⁴ makes perfect sense. Mr. R. P. WRIGHT's transcript in RIB is:

Victoriae
[Au]g(ustorum) Alfe-
no Senecio-
n[e] co(n)s(ulari) felix
ala I Asto(rum).

* For bibliography and abbreviations see end of article.

¹ RIB 1337 = CIL VII 513 = LS 27. RIB cites in the apparatus the views of earlier scholars (DAVENPORT, BAXTER, CAY, HUEBNER, MCCAUL, HORSLEY). For the early history of this inscription E. BIRLEY (1967).

² Quoted in WATKIN 143-4: «In No. 513, found at Benwell, Dr. Hübner adopts Baxter's reading whilst giving a different expansion, but both Baxter's and Horsley's readings are erroneous. In the Ashmolean MSS (826, fo. 37) in the Bodleian Library at Oxford there is an account of the discovery of this stone, with two drawings of it, one of them being in a letter from Dr. Geo. Davenport to Mr. Dugdale, dated May 30, 1670, a few months after it was found. In both of these copies the second, third, and fourth lines are thus given

AVGG ALFE
NO SENECIO
NI COS FELIX

The I in the last line is ligulate, being formed by an upward prolongation of the last stroke of the N, and is probably meant for part of the letter E, the rest having been obliterated. In any case the correct reading of the stone is established, showing that the word *Felix*, instead of being a proper name, is used in the same sense as in the inscription lately found in the forum at *Cilurnum* (Lap. Sept. No. 943).» On the latter (RIB 1466) see below, note 138.

³ HORSLEY 211, Northumberland IX a, 346, and preface xiv. This figure is reproduced in RIB 1337.

⁴ The second letter in the third line is not s but o, as DAVENPORT in fact recognised; possibly it was written in a smaller style, as in the fourth and fifth lines, and hence HORSLEY's error. From the readings of DAVENPORT, BAXTER, and CAY it is clear that there was something after the first letter of the fourth line, probably e; BAXTER's reading SENECIO/NE, is probably correct; see DAVENPORT's comment quoted in note 2.

He translates this: «To the Victory of the Emperors while Alfenus Senecio was consular governor, the Fortunate First Cavalry Regiment of Asturians (set this up).»

Alfenus Senecio was the third of the generals appointed by Severus to govern Britain after the defeat of Clodius Albinus and the barbarian invasion of Britain and damage to Hadrian's Wall and the contemporary Brigantian uprising in 197.⁵ He was one of the most senior and capable generals of his day.⁶ He is attested⁷ as responsible for the repair of forts at Risingham,⁸ Chesters,⁹ Birdoswald,¹⁰ Bowes,¹¹ Greta Bridge,¹² Brough-by-Bainbridge,¹³ and probably at several other forts also.¹⁴ The date of Senecio's command can be established reasonably precisely: Valerius Pudens was governor in 205¹⁵ and this provides the *terminus post quem*; in the Risingham inscription Caracalla is COS II, a description applying only to the years 205–7;¹⁶ in none of the other inscriptions is his younger brother Geta described as Augustus, to which position he was promoted from Caesar in 209, probably towards the end of the year.¹⁷ Although the letters at the beginning of the second line of the Benwell inscription are missing in HORSLEY's drawing, DAVENPORT's reading $\widehat{\text{AVGG}}$ may confidently be accepted as correct.¹⁸

Senecio's command is sometimes described as imperial legate, at times as consular governor.¹⁹ This clash unfortunately does not help to resolve the problems

⁵ The writer prefers the traditional date of 197 for the destruction caused to Hadrian's Wall; STEER 91; A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 196–7, 246; FRERE 168–9; RICHMOND (1963) 56–7; id. (1969) 19. For modern dates of c. 180 or c. 205 JARRETT-MANN 192–7, well criticised by A. R. BIRLEY (1972). For the campaigns against the Brigantes see also below, notes 28–35.

⁶ A. R. BIRLEY (1967) 79–80, no. 38; id. (1971 a) 247–9, 337; GRAHAM 93–4, 101–3; JARRETT-MANN 198; PIR² A 521 (GROAG).

⁷ See previous note and MANN (1970) nos. 99–111.

⁸ RIB 1234 = ILS 2618.

⁹ RIB 1462.

¹⁰ RIB 1909.

¹¹ RIB 740.

¹² RIB 746.

¹³ RIB 722 with JRS 59, 1969, 246 (c); RIB 723 with JRS 59, 1969, 246 (d); ALFÖLDY (1969) 4–5. Cf. AE 1969–70, 328–9.

¹⁴ RIB 1151 (Corbridge); RIB 1612 (Housesteads) with JRS 52, 1962, 194, no. 16; JRS 57, 1967, 205–6, no. 17 = AE 1967, 260; RIB 1277 (High Rochester); RIB 1910 and 1913 (Birdoswald); RIB 591 (Ribchester); RIB 576 and 581 (Manchester). All these inscriptions pre-date the upgrading of Geta to Augustus in 209 (see below, note 17), though they are not all necessarily to be assigned to Senecio's term. Contemporary inscriptions from Wales include RIB 326 and 333 (Caerleon) and 430 (Caernarvon), though again not necessarily to the governorship of Senecio, and Wales may well have belonged then to a separate province; see below, note 20.

¹⁵ JRS 51, 1961, 192, no. 4 = AE 1962, 260 with JRS 59, 1969, 246 (b); ALFÖLDY (1969) 3–4. Cf. AE 1969–70, 327.

¹⁶ RIB 1234 = ILS 2618; A. R. BIRLEY (1967) 80.

¹⁷ A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 264; MILLER 41.

¹⁸ There was clearly no third G, as the reading of DAVENPORT and even the misreadings of BAXTER and CAY (XVCG) clearly demonstrate. WATKIN 144 does not indicate a ligature; non vidi DAVENPORT's MSS.

¹⁹ *leg. Augg. pr. pr.* – RIB 740 (RIB 591 and JRS 57, 1967, 205–6, no. 17 = AE 1967, 260 have the same formula and probably refer to Senecio, see note 14); it is restored in RIB

either of the date or of the line of the border when Britain was divided into two provinces or the status of Northern Britain at the time.²⁰ The different titles are probably without major significance,²¹ except that they may reflect uncertainty among some units as to the precise sphere of control and the legal status of Senecio's command.²² It is normally supposed that Senecio's command was superseded in 208 with the arrival of the emperors for their campaigns in Scotland.²³ However, it is logical to suppose that as a good general with first-rate practical experience of the situation in Britain he remained there to assist the emperors in their conduct of the war into Scotland; as such he presumably held the post of *comes*,²⁴ although it is perfectly possible that he continued to be governor but now under the command of Severus and Caracalla;²⁵ at any rate, he was not replaced by Geta,²⁶ as is at times supposed.²⁷

1151; *leg. eorum pr. pr.* – RIB 746; *cos.* – RIB 1337, 1909, and 1462; *v. c. cos.* – RIB 1234 = ILS 2618; *amplissimus cos.* – RIB 722 and 723.

²⁰ The theories of earlier scholars include RITTERLING; MILLER; E. BIRLEY (1934) and (1953 a). These are discussed by FRERE 176–8; A. R. BIRLEY (1967) 78–9, 86, 101; *id.* (1971 a) 197, 247, 270.

The most detailed discussion is that of GRAHAM, who argues that Herodian (3, 8, 2) is mistaken and that the division first took place c.213; his interpretation is challenged by MANN-JARRETT who argue that Herodian is correct in assigning the division to 197 but that the frontier line was altered in c.213.

²¹ RITTERLING 1609 argued that the use of *cos.* showed that the consular governor was intervening in a procuratorial province. This theory is rightly rejected by E. BIRLEY (1934) 133–7 and GRAHAM 95. GRAHAM 96 shows that at this time there was no difference between *leg. Aug. pr. pr.* and *cos.* See also below, notes 116–124.

²² If, for example, E. BIRLEY (1953 a) 59–62 were correct that Northern England was a procuratorial province or MILLER that it was praetorian and the consular governor of Upper Britain had the right to intervene.

²³ E. BIRLEY (1951 a): 205 to about 208; GRAHAM 101–2: 205–8; A. R. BIRLEY (1967) 79–80: 205–7; PIR³ A 521: 205–7.

²⁴ For *comites* of the emperors in the British campaign note C. Iulius Avitus Alexianus (AE 1963, 42), C. Junius Faustinus Placidus Postumianus (CIL VIII 11763); A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 249, 253, 298–9, 348. Cf. Herodian 3, 14, 9; 3, 15, 4 and 6. There was also Papinian, the Praetorian Prefect; see below, note 108.

²⁵ Both Aulus Plautius and Platorius Nepos continued to be governor when Claudius and Hadrian were in the province. Cf. GRAHAM 94, who shows that the *praefectus Aegypti* continued to hold office when the Severi were in Egypt.

²⁶ Herodian 3, 14, 9 simply means that Geta was entrusted with the day-to-day running of the Empire, leaving the two senior Augusti to concentrate on the running of the campaigns. Geta is rightly excluded from the list of governors by A. R. BIRLEY (1967); cf. *id.* (1971 a) 255–7, 263. Before leaving for Britain Severus had deliberately placed his own trusted men in key provinces or replaced a senatorial governor by an equestrian procurator *agens vice legati*; *ibid.* 252–3.

It will be remembered that Claudius entrusted temporarily the running of the Empire to L. Vitellius while he was directing the campaign in Britain (Dio 60, 21, 2); Caligula, significantly, made no such provision; DAVIES (1966) 126.

²⁷ E. g. GRAHAM 94; FRERE 171, 175.

It seems quite clear that Senecio must have had some campaigning to carry out while he was governor and before the arrival of Severus;²⁸ this may have been against certain sections of the Brigantes rather than against the Caledonians and Maeatae, who had been bought off by an earlier governor, Virius Lupus.²⁹ Cassius Dio records that Severus's troops were winning wars under the command of his generals in Britain in the period 206–8;³⁰ two altars from Yorkshire are dedicated to Dea Victoria Brigantia and one is firmly dated to 208.³¹ Herodian also records that the governor of Britain needed reinforcements or an imperial expedition to complete the conquest.³² Indeed, the prominence of the preparations for the British Expedition on the coins of Caracalla of 207 has led to the suggestion that Caracalla himself arrived earlier than his father to take charge of the situation.³³ Coins of 208 to Jupiter the Victorious and an inscription from Arrabona to the Victory of the two Emperors might suggest that Caracalla had taken an advance part of the expeditionary forces, probably including *legio I* and *II Adiutrix*, with him to Britain and had had some successes.³⁴ The organisation for the full-scale expedition was probably in the very capable hands of Oclatinus Adventus, the head of the imperial intelligence service, who is attested as co-operating with Alfenus Senecio on two inscriptions in the frontier area.³⁵

Something of this situation is reflected in the Benwell inscription. The dedication to Victoria and the two winged victories imply that the unit had been in action. More significant is the use of the word *felix*, which means 'fortunate' or 'successful'.

²⁸ RIB 1138 (Corbridge) is an altar to Victoria Aug(usta) dedicated by L. Julius Julianus, legate of *legio II Augusta* (CIL XI 4182); E. BIRLEY (1953 b) 51; DAVIES (1976 b). It is probable that Corbridge was to be the site of a new legionary fortress, if 'Site XI' was a planned *principia*; cf. FRERE 172. A statue-base from the *aedes* of the HQ at Corbridge shows that the legion was here at full strength probably under the Severi (RIB 1127).

Two late writers state that the frontier was (re)built in 207 (Jerome, *Chronicle* Severus an. 14; Cassiodorus *ibid*). Quarry inscriptions from Gelt in Cumberland show quarrying in 207 (RIB 1009, cf. 1010) and a detachment of *legio II Augusta* (RIB 1008) and another of *legio XX Valeria Victrix* (RIB 1014); nearby the presence (though not necessarily contemporary) of *legio VI Victrix* is attested (RIB 1016); DAVIES (1968) 22–3. Possibly the famous 'Hadrianic' building inscription (RIB 1051 Jarrow) is Severan; cf. E. BIRLEY (1961) 159. Consequently, there would have been time for the army to go onto the offensive. For the military situation A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 244, 249.

²⁹ Dio 75, 5, 4. Cf. A. R. BIRLEY (1972).

³⁰ Dio 76, 10, 6.

³¹ RIB 627 = ILS 4719 (Greetland); RIB 628 = ILS 4720 (Castleford).

³² Herodian 3, 14, 1.

³³ RICHMOND (1963) 57–8; A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 251–2; FRERE 173–5, pl. 4, nos. 8–9.

³⁴ A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 251–2; CIL III 11082: *victoriae Augg. nm. et leg. I Adi. p. f. Antoniniana*; BMC V 262.

³⁵ RIB 1234 = ILS 2618 (Risingham); RIB 1462 (Chesters); MANN-JARRETT 64; A. R. BIRLEY (1967) 78, 86, no. 44 a; *id.* (1971 a) 248; E. BIRLEY (1953 a) 55 believed him to be a presidial governor of a procuratorial province centred on Carlisle.

This word is used particularly in a military sense;³⁶ it was the word chosen by the emperors to describe their campaigns in Britain;³⁷ consequently, the choice of this adjective and its predicate position strongly imply that the *ala I Asturum* was using it in an official and special sense: they had been in action and they had been successful.³⁸

Outside the plaque, at the bottom corners of the slab, and slightly below the fifth and last line of the inscription, are a few letters. On the left side the first two letters, although badly weathered, are RV and the third is without doubt M. On the right side are PR, which is followed by what may be a small A or perhaps a triangular stop.³⁹ HUEBNER⁴⁰ and WRIGHT both interpreted the letters on the right as *praefecto* and those to the left as the initial (e. g. *Marciano*) or initials of the prefect; WRIGHT translates the line as «when . . M(. . .) was prefect».

This interpretation raises problems. Why should the name and rank of the unit's commander be put outside the frame? This is an impressive official dedication, and by using very slightly smaller lettering or by abbreviating or by ligaturing the additional information could easily have been put inside the frame.⁴¹ WRIGHT cites no parallel for the initials of a commander being used on an official dedication;⁴² moreover, after his departure the initials would not be understood; furthermore, no praenomen begins with the letter R. In addition it is hard to parallel just the name and rank of the unit commander in the Ablative Absolute construction;⁴³ as the other dedications under Alfenus Senecio show, some such word as *curante* or *instante* must precede the name or the preposition *per* must be used.⁴⁴

There is a very simple solution to all these problems: the reading provided by

³⁶ It appears in the titles of *legiones IV Flavia* and *VII Gemina*, in both cases probably conferred by Vespasian; cf. RITTERLING 1370, 1542. The only auxiliary units possessing this title are *ala Augusta Moesica felix torquata* (CICHORIUS [1894] 1226, 1240, 1252), *cohors I Ascalonitanorum felix* (CICHORIUS [1901] 245, 284).

³⁷ E. g. RIB 1143 = ILS 9124 (Corbridge); for other examples MANN (1970) no. 126. *Felix* also occurs in Caracalla's nomenclature.

³⁸ Possibly the translation of these lines should be «Fortunate (is) the First Ala of Asturians.»

³⁹ None of the A's in the frame is barred nor is any carved in a smaller lettering. It was not regarded as an A by CAY or BAXTER.

⁴⁰ In CIL, however, HUEBNER regarded Felix as the name of the prefect, the M as AST[VRV]M, and *praefectus* in the nominative, as with Alfenus Senecio. Cf. DAVENPORT's correction quoted in note 2.

⁴¹ Only three letters (all in the one word) are ligatured, although DAVENPORT read another two in the lacuna (but see note 18); only three letters are written small.

⁴² The present writer is unable to parallel this alleged practice.

⁴³ I can find no parallel for this for a commandant, although it is common, of course, for the governor.

⁴⁴ RIB 1234 = ILS 2618 – *curante*; RIB 1462 – *instante*; RIB 1909 – *per*; RIB 722 revised – nominative in apposition, *institit* restored; RIB 723 revised – *cui praeest* clause; RIB 740 and 746 – unit commander not mentioned. For other third century examples MANN (1970) nos. 95, 98, 160, 161, 168, 169, 170, 172, 174, 175, 176, 178, 179, 181, 182, 183, 184.

HORSLEY is perfectly correct, but the unit's name is divided, just as the nomen and cognomen of the governor are divided between lines 2–3 and 3–4 respectively. The mason spelt the unit's name with an o instead of a v, a common mispronunciation of Latin in Roman Britain.⁴⁵ For a perfect parallel one may note the tombstone of a veteran decurion of the sister unit *alae II Astor(um)* [sic] at Lincoln.⁴⁶ In the <Notitia> entries for the frontier army of Britain the First *ala* at Benwell is called *Astorum*⁴⁷ and this is also the spelling of the Second *ala* of Asturians stationed at Chesters, though with a superfluous aspirate;⁴⁸ although the manuscripts vary in the spelling of the name of the cohort of Asturians at Great Chesters,⁴⁹ it is always given with an o, never a v.⁵⁰ This misspelling occurs in other provinces too: in the career inscription of a *praef. co[h. I] Astorum* recorded in Italy near Pisaurum,⁵¹ on the tombstone of an other rank of *coh. I Astor*. set up in Pannonia at Aquincum,⁵² and also in the case of a doctor of the next cavalry regiment in this series *medico alar. Indianae et tertiae Astorum* found in Italy at Viterbium.⁵³ From the Greek geographer Strabo's work it can be seen that the second syllable was pronounced and written differently.⁵⁴ HORSLEY's reading, though not his interpretation, is thus vindicated.⁵⁵

This leaves the two or three letters in the bottom right corner. The normal – indeed, the only – word to be expected here is a title of honour awarded to the unit. It is clearly not derived from the names of the emperors.⁵⁶ There is only one

⁴⁵ MANN (1971) 221.

⁴⁶ RIB 226, where *v[et]*, if not *v[e]t* should be read in the first line.

⁴⁷ Notitia Dignitatum (ed. SEECK) Occ. XL, 35: *astorum*.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 38: *hastorum*.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 42: *astorum* (o above r), *astorum*, *astrorum*. There is some confusion as to whether it is the First or the Second Cohort that was stationed here.

⁵⁰ The only other unit of Asturians attested in the <Notitia> is Occ. XXVI, 19: *tribunus coh. tertiae hastorum* at Tabernae in Tingitana.

⁵¹ CIL XI 6337.

⁵² CIL III 10507.

⁵³ CIL XI 3007 = ILS 2542. Although CICHORIUS (1894) 1231 and DESSAU regarded this unit as otherwise unattested, it now is known to have been in the army of Tingitana in 88 (AE 1953, 74).

⁵⁴ Cf. TLL II (1900–6) 980 s. v. Astur, which also cites Orosius 6, 21, 1 for this spelling. For the many variations on military inscriptions note the comments of CICHORIUS (1901) 247: «*Astarum* wird hier für Asturum ebenso verschieden sein, wie wir anderwärts dafür *Astorum*, *Astirum* und *Astyrum* finden», on Notitia Dignitatum Or. XXVIII, 36; add *Hastr.*, *Aestureru.*, *Aesturorum*. Cf. also RE 2, 1896, 1863–4 s. v. Asturia.

⁵⁵ HORSLEY 211: «I was also pleased to discover the small o at the end of the last line, which is sufficiently distinct and certain, and proves the word to be *Astorum* not *Asturum*, in which it agrees with the Notitia. That part of the stone which is near the m in the bordering, is imperfect and broken. I make no doubt but the letters rv have been before the m, and that it is to be read ASTORVM; and then the PRA on the other side can be for nothing else but praefectus.» Ibid. 212 connects the unit with the Asti in Liguria, but this is corrected in pref. xiv.

⁵⁶ The traces cannot possibly fit either Septimius Severus or Aurelius Antoninus.

title beginning with *PR-* awarded to auxiliary units: *praetoria*. This was very rarely awarded,⁵⁷ and consequently could only have been given for very meritorious service; it seems to have been placed before the unit's name in the genitive, not after it as here. The title *praetoria* can only mean that a unit had seen distinguished service at the *praetorium* of an emperor.⁵⁸ Thus it would appear that the *ala I Asturum* had campaigned with considerable success under the command of an emperor. No other British unit is known to have been awarded this honour,⁵⁹ and by the early third century it was probably the highest title that a unit could have bestowed on it as an honour.⁶⁰

However, a simple emendation may provide a British parallel. Excavations recently at Carpow revealed that a legionary fortress was built there for the campaigns of Severus;⁶¹ as some two hundred tile examples showed,⁶² *legio VI Victrix* had been awarded the title *Britannica*,⁶³ it is normally assumed that this

⁵⁷ CICHORIUS (1894) 1258 and (1901) 326 cite only *ala I praetoria c. R.*; *ala I Flavia praetoria singularium c. R.*; *cohors I Augusta praetoria Lusitanorum*. The order for prestige may be seen in CIL 600 = ILS 2724 + add. where of six *alae praetoria* is listed first, then *Augusta*, then the ones without honours.

⁵⁸ Cf. SPEIDEL s. v. *ala I Flavia praetoria singularium c. R.*: «*Praetoria* is a surname borne by other units too . . . it will, therefore, refer to honorable service of the *ala* at perhaps the Emperor's headquarter rather than to the unit's recruitment from the guard.» The former is surely right; Augustus's campaigns in Spain or those of the early first century in Germany would be suitable opportunities. The title can hardly refer to the *praetorium* of a governor, as he had the *singulares* to escort him; the fate of Sallustius Lucullus would mean that no governor could grant the title *praetoria* to a unit for service at his own *praetorium*; Suetonius, Dom. 10, 3.

⁵⁹ Units were awarded different honours for distinguished service in Britain: en bloc citizenship (*c. R.*) to *ala Petriana*, *cohortes I Baetasiorum* and *II Nerviorum*; imperial names eg. *Aelia* to *cohortes I Dacorum* and *I Hispanorum*; titles and medals, e. g. *invicta bis torquata* to *ala Classiana*. The purpose of these rewards is clearly revealed in RIB 893–4, 897 (Old Carlisle) *ala Augusta ob virtutem appellata*, RIB 2170 (Bar Hill) *cohors I Baetasiorum c. R. ob virtutem et fidem*.

⁶⁰ All the examples cited above are not later than the (early) reign of Antoninus Pius. He also severely restricted the award of Roman citizenship to the military, and possibly by the end of the century many auxiliaries already possessed it (SALMON 55); after 212 *c. R.* as a title of honour was rather pointless. A title of honour derived from an Emperor's name could be confused with a title indicating the reign a unit was raised e. g. *cohors I Septimia Belgarum*.

⁶¹ A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 259–6, map 4, pl. 13–4; R. E. BIRLEY. Annual summaries of the excavations will be found in JRS 52, 1962, 163, and following volumes; Britannia 1, 1970, 273–4, and following volumes.

⁶² JRS 52, 1962, 197, no. 37; 53, 1963, no. 30; A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 259, pl. 14 b; id. (1971 b) 90.

⁶³ For the same award to a legion as to an emperor of a title derived from the place of successful campaigning note *legio II Traiana fortis Germanica* (CIL III 14130 revising 12057 = ILS 2319; III 6592 = ILS 2345; III 14137 = ILS 8998; cf. RITTERLING 1317–8. Id. 1311–5, 1371 shows no other existing legion was awarded a title derived from a place by Severus.

was in 209, when the emperors awarded themselves the same title of *Britannicus*, 'Conqueror of Britain', at the end of their first major campaign.⁶⁴ However, it seems that by the end of Caracalla's sole reign, if not earlier in 213, the legion had dropped the title.⁶⁵ It is not impossible that the title *Britannica* was awarded to other units too.

The Benwell inscription shows that the *ala I Asturum* had distinguished itself in the campaigning under Alfenus Senecio; consequently, it would have been chosen to take a prominent role among the auxiliary cavalry in the campaigns in Scotland.⁶⁶ There it distinguished itself further and was awarded the title PRA(ETORIA) or PR(ITANNICA).⁶⁷ The troops would naturally wish to have this new and valued title displayed prominently in their fort at Benwell, and so they added it outside the frame of the inscription. As there was insufficient room to put it underneath in impressive sized letters, the title was added to the bottom right corner; to balance this, the rest of the unit's name, hitherto abbreviated, was added to the bottom left corner. It is not known how long the *ala* was allowed to retain this title of honour; certainly *legio VI Victrix* very soon lost the privilege of being called *Britannica*, possibly in 213.⁶⁸ It is known that at this time many of the auxiliary units in the North of England were not allowed the title *Antoniniana*, until the troops had shown themselves to be completely loyal to Caracalla.⁶⁹

There is only one other official inscription of this unit of a later date; this is

⁶⁴ A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 255, 259, 264; MILLER 41; JARRETT-MANN 200–1 date the award to 210.

⁶⁵ MANN-JARRETT 64: «The title *Britannicus* was dropped early in 213 merely in anticipation of the assumption of *Germanicus* later in the same year.» However, Caracalla is still described as Britannicus Maximus in Britain as late as 216 RIB 1279 (High Rochester); 1203 (Whitley Castle).

Their note 41 reads: «He obviously planned deliberately to substitute, for a victory which was not really his (in Britain), a victory which was all his own (in Germany).» This seems most unlikely; Caracalla had played a major part in the preparations (see notes 33–4) and in the first campaign and seems to have conducted the campaign of 210 entirely by himself (Herodian 3, 15, 1; cf. A. R. BIRLEY [1971 a] 268). The dropping of the title *Britannicus* is more likely to be political, a result of Caracalla's dissatisfaction with the attitude of the British army to the death of Geta in 212; see below, notes 69, 153.

JRS 51, 1961, 196, no. 28 a, and note 34 (Caerleon) is a tile stamp LEG II A]VG VI, which could be a short-lived title *Victrix* rather than *Victoriniana*.

⁶⁶ *Legio VI Victrix* may have taken part similarly in these campaigns with success; cf. DAVIES (1968) 25 on RIB 1953–4; cf. RIB 582.

⁶⁷ If the latter were read, then the last letter could in fact be a triangular stop misread by the early scholars. See above, note 39.

⁶⁸ See above, note 65. It is attested on only one inscription at its main base York, a tile-stamp (JRS 53, 1963, 164, no. 29 b, CIL VII 1223). The fact that it is never attested for certain elsewhere strongly suggests that the legion had been deprived of this title of honour; A. R. BIRLEY (1971 b) 90, note 92, suggests it may appear on CIL VIII 5180 = 17266 = ILAlg I 539, 1.

⁶⁹ E. BIRLEY (1934); for examples MANN (1970) nos. 154–9.

a dedication-slab, set up at Benwell in 238, to commemorate the repair of a temple to the goddesses of the parade ground and the genius of the regiment.⁷⁰ The unit's title is given in full: *alae pri(mae) Hispanorum Asturum* [...] *Gordi[a]nae*. The erasure probable contained the titles *Pupienae Balbinae*, as MOMMSEN and WRIGHT conjectured.⁷¹ As the erasure was so thorough, it is not possible to say whether or not there was also the title *praetoriae* after the unit's name, as on the Alfenus Senecio inscription. However, it is very rare indeed for the numeral of a unit to be replaced by the ordinal adjective in Roman Britain;⁷² in the third century *prima* occurs in only 1–2% of examples instead of the digit 1.⁷³ The letter interpreted as the *i* in *pri(mae)* by all other epigraphists very clearly has a superscript bar, which it demonstrably does not have in any of the half dozen examples of *i* elsewhere in this inscription.⁷⁴ Hence it remains to be considered whether this unit was allowed to retain its title of honour, which was subsequently placed in a more prominent position, and that the correct reading here is in fact *alae pr(aetoriae) I Hispanorum Asturum*.⁷⁵

In the first line WRIGHT, following all other scholars, reads *matr(ibus) tribus*;

⁷⁰ RIB 1334 = CIL VII 510 = LS 22 = ILS 4828.

⁷¹ It is strange that the names of Gordian's senior colleagues, Pupienus and Balbinus, were erased, as they were not normally subjected to *damnatio memoriae*. A possible reason might be that they had been hostile towards and had been killed by the soldiers at Rome; hence the military commanders may have decided to damn their names on military inscriptions.

It is also strange that part of the name of the prefect has been erased. WRIGHT's T(erentius?) seems unlikely; a shorter nomen such as Titius might be more probable, though the possibility should be remembered that, even though this is a mid-third century dedication, the T is the praenomen Titus and the whole nomen was erased. Did the prefect have the same name as an emperor or governor who was damned at this time? It seems unlikely that it represents a deleted title of the *ala*, such as *torquata*.

⁷² The only examples cited in his apparatus by WRIGHT are RIB 1392 (Heddon), 1334 (Benwell), 1350 (Benwell), 1898 (Birdoswald), all *prima*, and 589 (Ribchester) *sexta*; to these add 1523 (Carrawburgh). 1392 seems a dubious reading of a lost inscription, and the comment of C. E. STEVENS, quoted in the apparatus, is worth noting: «the full spelling of *coh. [p]rim(a)* seems unique.» I cast doubts on the reading of 1334 below. 589 is restored in a heavily restored lost inscription.

⁷³ In the third century frontier zone «First» units (all cohorts) are epigraphically attested with the following frequency: – Carrawburgh – 8; Housesteads – 10; Birdoswald – 22; Netherby – 4; Risingham – 7; High Rochester – 7; Lanchester – 3. Of these 61 inscriptions only one does not have the numeral 1: RIB 1898 (Birdoswald), a poorly read lost dedication. The second century garrisons at Maryport are attested as follows: *cohors I Hispanorum* – 10; *cohors I Delmatarum* – 5; *cohors I Baetasiorum* – 5; all 20 inscriptions always have 1. Of the cohorts known to have been stationed in Britain 6 of the 7 milliary and 24 of the 48 quingenary were «First» cohorts.

⁷⁴ It seems far too pronounced and elongated to be merely a serif.

⁷⁵ The use of stops in this inscription is inconsistent, and hence the lack of one between PR and I proves nothing. The numeral, not the adjective, appears on all other inscriptions of this *ala*.

however, from COLLINGWOOD's fine drawing it is clear that there is no trace of the crossbar of the *t* of *tribus*, as there clearly is in the *t* of *matr(ibus)* or in six other places in the inscription. Although deities were often portrayed in triplicate,⁷⁶ there is no epigraphic parallel from Britain or elsewhere for *tres matres campestres*;⁷⁷ it seems best to suppose that the mason was guilty of dittography and to read *matri<ri>bus*.⁷⁸

It is unfortunate that very few other inscriptions of this unit are known from Benwell – or for that matter from elsewhere in Britain.⁷⁹ A fragmentary dedication-slab, unfortunately destroyed on discovery at Benwell, probably mentioned *a]lae I As[turum*.⁸⁰ Numerianus, an enterprising trooper of this regiment, prohibited by military regulations from engaging in trade himself,⁸¹ set up his freedman Victor, a Moor, to do this at South Shields, the port for the frontier.⁸²

A tombstone from Benwell may now be considered. COLLINGWOOD and WRIGHT's reading is:⁸³

D(is) [M(anibus)]
Aure[l . . .
p[.]l[.]ic[.] . . .
A[.]ep[.] . . .

The leafstop between *D* and *M* gives the midpoint; in the second line the base of the *l* is clearly visible and *Aure[l]* may be read, possibly written out in full.⁸⁴ The traces in the next line can be read in various ways. The last line was read by HORSLEY as *A.LE.PRI*, with the comment «but yet I incline to read it *alae primae*.» This reading was followed by HUEBNER in CIL with the comment «punctum post *Λ* extabat fortasse casu in lapide.» COLLINGWOOD's drawing in RIB strongly suggests that the readings of these two early epigraphists is correct and that *al(a)e pri[* was carved.⁸⁵ From the arguments adduced above it may be wondered

⁷⁶ As most notably Coventina at Carvoran. See also in the frontier zone RIB 1318 (Newcastle).

⁷⁷ DOMASZEWSKI (1895) 50–1 cites no other examples apart from this alleged instance, nor do the articles in RE and Diz. epigr. s. v. *campestres*. On the British examples and the *campestres* in general DAVIES (1969) 73, to which may possibly be added RIB 586 (Ribchester) and 2141 (Mumrills).

⁷⁸ The confusion may to some extent have been caused by the ligaturing of *ib* and the similarity in close proximity of the letters *r* and *b*.

⁷⁹ The origin of RIB 2089 is not known, even if it refers to this *ala*.

⁸⁰ RIB 1348 = CIL VII 537 = LS 28.

⁸¹ SANDER 213: «Es ist nicht die Aufgabe des Soldaten, ein Gewerbe zu betreiben oder Handelsgeschäfte zu tätigen.»

⁸² RIB 1064 + pl. XIV = EE VII 1002.

⁸³ RIB 1349 = CIL VII 538 = LS 30.

⁸⁴ It is omitted from the RIB translation. From the arguments advanced below it cannot be *Aurelia*.

⁸⁵ For *al(a)e* as a form of the genitive MANN (1971) 220, citing numerous parallels.

whether this, too, should be interpreted as *pr(aetoriae) I* [*Asturum*].⁸⁶ The fact that the nomen of the deceased was in fact given and was not omitted or abbreviated to *Aur.* would suggest a date in the third century not too long after the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in 212.⁸⁷ The letters in the third line might well be the cognomen of the deceased trooper of this *ala*.⁸⁸

A further inscription from Benwell may now be considered; this is the altar to An(ten)ociticus set up by Tineius Longus when he was transferred from service as an equestrian officer as *praefectus alae* to the senatorial order and designated quaestor.⁸⁹ This promotion was «by the decrees of our best and greatest Emperors, under Ulpius Marcellus, consular governor.» The altar was thus dedicated in a joint reign. The problem is to identify the emperors:⁹⁰ are they Marcus Aurelius and Commodus and is Ulpius Marcellus the governor who successfully won the British War of 180–4,⁹¹ or are they early third century emperors and the governor a son or grandson of Commodus's formidable general?⁹² Prof. E. BIRLEY has argued that there was a second Ulpius Marcellus,⁹³ attested on two inscriptions from Chesters, which involved the *ala II Asturum*, the third century garrison;⁹⁴ the lettering on one of them is very close in style to an inscription of 221–2.⁹⁵ He has also suggested that Marcellus must belong to the third century, as the units attested by epigraphy in the forts on Hadrian's Wall then and confirmed by the «*Notitia*» were different⁹⁶ from those, wherever known, in the Antonine period.⁹⁷ One of

⁸⁶ From the earlier drawing in LS there seems to be a superscript bar over I, unless it is part of the previous letter. There seems to be a space between R and I, though in this inscription that cannot necessarily be a strong argument.

⁸⁷ The traditional date of 212 still seems the most probable; cf. A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 273.

⁸⁸ Probably followed by the rank, e. g. *eq(ues)*, though not necessarily, cf. RIB 1350 (Benwell).

From KAJANTO's index the only possible cognomina to fit the lettering on the inscription appear to be Regiolus (316) and Pec(c)io (164).

⁸⁹ RIB 1329 = CIL VII 504 = LS 21 = ILS 4715.

⁹⁰ CICHORIUS (1894) 1230 dates it to the joint reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus (161–9); this is impossible, as Marcellus was not sent until the reign of Commodus, see below.

⁹¹ Dio 72, 8, 2–6; A. R. BIRLEY (1967) 76, 101, no. 33.

⁹² E. BIRLEY (1939 a) 243–4; A. R. BIRLEY (1967) 81–2, no. 38 b. ⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ RIB 1463–4; cf. the «*Notitia*» evidence cited above, note 48. The unit is first attested here under Alfenus Senecio and Oclatinus Adventus; see above, note 35. For the very unusual dative in RIB 1463 note the contemporary (?) examples at Chester-le-Street (RIB 1049) in 216 and South Shields (RIB 1060 = ILS 5759 a) in 222, both concerned with the supply of water to forts also.

⁹⁵ RIB 1466; see below, note 138.

⁹⁶ E. BIRLEY (1939 b) 198–9, 210–26. Cf. FRERE 168. A good motive for the change would be to break the local links the units had formed in their old forts (always an emotive factor, cf. Tacitus, hist. 2, 80) to ensure loyalty to the new emperor; the same reasoning lies behind the decision to divide the power and the forces of the governor (see above note 20, below notes 153–8).

⁹⁷ Archaeology has shown that Chesters was built in Hadrian's reign for an *ala quin-*

the Chesters dedications was made when there was only one emperor. As the Benwell inscription was set up under a plurality of emperors, he suggested the second decade of the third century, perhaps the reign of Macrinus (217–8).⁹⁸ However, the creation of the one legion praetorian province of Britannia Inferior had surely taken place by then,⁹⁹ and hence *consularis* could not be used to describe him.¹⁰⁰

Mr. WRIGHT, while accepting Prof. BIRLEY's views on the two Chesters inscriptions, assigns the Benwell altar to the second century. In his apparatus on the latter he comments:

«*Vlp(io) Marcello*: consular governor of Britain, A.D. 180–5. The shrine containing these two altars (RIB 1327 and 1329), demolished when they were overturned, contained no coin later than Marcus Aurelius and was therefore presumably destroyed in A.D. 197 (RICHMOND AA 4 xix [1941] 39 n. 136). In this case the joint emperors must be Marcus Aurelius and Commodus (see Atkinson *JRS* xii [1922] 68 no. 29). This will carry the governorship of Ulpius Marcellus back at least to the autumn of A.D. 180 as quaestors were designated for the forthcoming December on 23 January.»

This view has been challenged by Dr. A. R. BIRLEY, who rightly points out that Marcellus cannot have been governor under Marcus and Commodus, if Commodus sent him to conduct the British War after the death of another governor and that it would be most unsatisfactory to assume that Marcellus was governor twice.¹⁰¹ On the dating to 180 it is perhaps worth remembering that

genaria; under Antoninus Pius it was converted for use by a legionary care and maintenance squad; in later second century the garrison was *cohors I Delmatarum* (at Maryport under Pius). The wife of a tribune of *cohors I Vangionum* (in third century at Risingham) does not prove that unit was ever in garrison here. Cf. E. BIRLEY (1961) 172–5.

The only certain example of a later second century unit still in the same fort in the third century is the *ala Augusta* at Old Carlisle; cf. RIB 893–4, dated 188 and 191, with RIB 896–9, 905 of the third century. RIB 895 is dated to 197 and may suggest that Albinus left this *ala* behind as a mobile defence force to protect the frontier while (most of) the rest of the units were withdrawn for the civil war in Gaul; cf. E. BIRLEY (1939b) 30–2, 37–9. Presumably the *ala Petriana* returned to Stanwix because no other normal fort was large enough to house it. However, COLLINGWOOD-RICHMOND 40 argue that it was at Newstead in Antonine II period; HARTLEY 39–42, 53–4 shows from the samian pottery «that Newstead is likely to have been held at least down to 180, and that the Comitalis bowl attests some activity under Severus.» It is not impossible that Newstead was held until the time of Albinus.

⁹⁸ E. BIRLEY (1939a) 244; FRERE 179.

⁹⁹ 212–3 seems the most likely date. For the theories on the date and formation of the provinces see GRAHAM and MANN-JARRETT and above, notes 20–22.

¹⁰⁰ *Consularis* (or rather the Greek translation) is used in a private letter to refer to a praetorian governor (P. Mich. 466) but such a usage would not be permitted on official military dedications.

¹⁰¹ A. R. BIRLEY (1967) 81–2, no. 38b.

Marcus Aurelius died on 17th March of that year;¹⁰² WRIGHT's interpretation makes all the facts a very tight fit, surely too tightly.

Dr. BIRLEY suggests a refinement on his father's view: the emperors on the Benwell altar are Caracalla and Geta, the single emperor on the Chesters dedication is Caracalla after the assassination of his younger brother; the dates would be 211 and 212 respectively.¹⁰³ This is a most attractive suggestion and fits the facts better than any other theory. He concludes that Ulpius Marcellus II was thus the last consular governor of undivided Britain.¹⁰⁴ It should be noted that there is a slight inaccuracy made by the mason in carving the inscription; the Latin reads *optimorum maximorumque imp. n.* Normally the number of *p*'s and *n*'s should be the same, corresponding with the number of Augusti.¹⁰⁵ The first *p* is not at all clear, though whether it was erased in Roman times or in the result of damage to the stone in modern times must remain open.¹⁰⁶ The 'best and greatest emperors' may perhaps include Severus.¹⁰⁷ He also cites a passage of Herodian,

¹⁰² A. R. BIRLEY (1966) 283.

¹⁰³ See notes 92–3.

¹⁰⁴ However, if the MANN-JARRETT thesis is accepted, he would have been governor of the two legion consular province of Britannia Inferior. It is not impossible, though perhaps unlikely, that Julius Marcus succeeded him and was executed, not because he could not exculpate himself as governor at the time of the outbreak of the soldiers' dissatisfaction, but because he had failed in his task of bringing them to heel sufficiently soon and convincingly enough for Caracalla's suspicions. Cf. A. R. BIRLEY (1967) 87, no. 45; DAVIES (1976 a and b).

¹⁰⁵ E. g. RIB 4, 326, 450, 622, 915, 1613, 1912, 2057–8, 2074; for those of the Severan period note RIB 1234 = ILS 2618 (above, note 8), 2266, and JRS 51, 1961, 192, no. 4 = AE 1962, 260 (above, note 15); see also above, note 34. NN to mean *nostris* of two emperors is common in the military papyri in the third century; FINK nos. 83, 86, 91, 98, 99 (the last two dated 208 referring to Severus and Caracalla). No. 91 is to be noted, where the same official in two addresses in 221 is described as *proc. augg. nn.* and *proc. augg. n.*

¹⁰⁶ It seems clear in LS 21. If there were two emperors, this would apply until the end of 209 (see note 17). If there was only one *p* (the first one presumably being damage to the stone at the time of carving), then this could extend the period to the time of the three joint Augusti; it is not impossible that the apparent doubling of the *p* simply means that there was more than one emperor (as *optimorum maximorum* clearly shows) but not necessarily specifically two, especially in view of the mason's departure from the normal practice of the letter *N*. One may note, for example, that in RIB 605 (bis), 583, 765, 780, 897, 1049 (all third century Northern England) *EQQ* is simply used as the plural. One may compare a morning report of 239 from *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* at Dura-Europos (FINK no. 50) where the clerks wrote *ORDD VI, DECC IIII*, and possibly *EQQ IIII*; also a circular letter dated to 208 (FINK no. 98) where the governor wrote to *tribb. et praef. et praepositis nn.* (here = *numerosum*, though in the next line = *nostrorum duorum*), where the doubling of the letter means no more than the plural, as is even more obvious from the catalogue of five garrison posts, at least one of which contained more than one unit.

¹⁰⁷ As soon as Severus came to power in 193, the Senate issued coins bearing his head and on the reverse the title *SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI* (COHEN 316, no. 634). The *optimus princeps* par excellence had been Trajan, and Severus deliberately chose the centenary of his accession to found the Severan dynasty; cf. A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 202.

referring to the period immediately after Severus's death in February 211, to support his interpretation:¹⁰⁸ «He (Caracalla) secretly kept on trying by gifts and lavish promises to bribe the military commanders to induce the army to make him sole emperor.» Of these officers Tineius Longus would be a very suitable one for Caracalla to attempt to buy his loyalty; indeed, the emperor had been trying to do the same while on campaign the previous year.¹⁰⁹ Another of these commanders was Marcus Caecilius Donatianus *militans tribunus in praefecto dono principis*; he made a dedication in honour of Julia Domna in the period 212–7.¹¹⁰

There are several other pieces of evidence which may be added about the dating. The lack of a praenomen for Longus and the abbreviation of *quaestor designatus* to the initial letters would suit a third century date better than a second.¹¹¹ The proffered coin evidence is misleading: only four coins were found and identified for certain by the excavators, a total that can hardly be regarded as statistically valid, especially as two were of silver.¹¹² It may also be misleading to assume that the

¹⁰⁸ 3, 15, 4–5; cf. Dio 77, 1, 1–3. Papinian, the *praefectus praetorio*, was now dismissed and murdered in the next year because he was a supporter of Geta; he was probably succeeded by Oclatinus Adventus (see note 35); PFLAUM 662–7, no. 247.

¹⁰⁹ Herodian 3, 15, 1; cf. Dio 77, 14, 1–7 (in part perhaps dated to 209). Perhaps he succeeded; SHA Sev. 18, 9–10.

¹¹⁰ RIB 1791 and discussion contra E. BIRLEY (1961) 195, but who shows that Donatianus was of African origin; his unit thus will have been *cohors II Delmatarum*. It is worth noting that Julia Domna was associated in some of the loyalty dedications to her son in 212 (see note 69) e. g. RIB 1235 (Risingham) and 976 (Netherby), both from the HQ, and also in other dedications e. g. RIB 590 (Ribchester) with A. R. BIRLEY (1967) 87–8. On Donatianus's promotion see DOMASZEWSKI (1908) 130. See also DAVIES (1976 a). RIB 1131 = ILS 9318 (Corbridge) may also honour Julia and associate her with the region (Brigantia) and Salus.

¹¹¹ Cf. E. BIRLEY (1953 b) 158–9; the lack of filiation and tribe would also suggest a third century date, as might the fact that the shapes of the letters are not consistent throughout the inscription nor is the writing horizontal.

¹¹² Silver of Nero (A. D. 54) and Marcus, bronze of Domitian (A. D. 92) and Pius with Marcus as Caesar are noted by RICHMOND l. c., but there were other 'defaced' bronze coins. Pace RICHMOND, BRUCE's original account with the showing of the coins by RENDEL, the excavator, may indicate a silver coin of Severus (A. D. 201) and bronze of Valerian (A. D. 253–9) and Laelianus (A. D. 268) at the temple; Archaeologia Aeliana 2nd ser. 6, 1865, 155 (BRUCE) and 170 (RENDEL).

E. BIRLEY (1961) 260–1 rightly shows that the coin evidence must be used with caution; of the identified coins from milecastles, turrets, and miscellaneous Wall structures 29/82 (35%) are pre-Hadrianic and 47/82 (57%) pre-Severan; «pre-Hadrianic silver continued in circulation on a very substantial scale throughout the second century – almost 70% of the *denarii* in the Rudchester hoard are pre-Hadrianic, almost 50% pre-Trajanic.» One may add that outside the fort of Carrawburgh (not constructed until c. 130) the earliest coins in Coventina's well date to Mark Antony's time and no less than 2,980 coins (including 36 silver), 11% of those found, are pre-Hadrianic; cf. Archaeologia Aeliana 2nd ser. 8, 1880, 43–5. J. P. GILLAM has pointed out to me in another context that the latest stratified coin in a second century occupation level at Birdoswald fort on Hadrian's Wall was Trajanic!

temple of Antenociticus at Benwell was destroyed by the Caledonians and Macatae; recent archaeology has shown that the enemy destruction to the Hadrianic frontier was not as widespread and universal as once was thought; the forts at Housesteads, Carrawburgh and South Shields certainly escaped destruction,¹¹³ and it must be asked whether the temple at Benwell was simply abandoned and destroyed at a later date.¹¹⁴ Excavation in recent years has also suggested that in various of the forts *per lineam valli* there were no garrisons in occupation for appreciable periods of the third century.¹¹⁵

There is one further piece of evidence which may clinch the argument over the dating: the usage in Britain of the terminology for the governor. If the debatable Marcellus inscriptions are put on one side for the moment, there are thirty-five inscriptions of the first and second century in which the governor's post is given or may confidently be restored because of the exigencies of spacing or because the layout of the stone is identical with that of others, as on the milecastle dedications on Hadrian's Wall. *Legatus Augusti pro praetore* is used twenty-five times and must be restored in a further nine,¹¹⁶ *consularis* is used only once, a fragmentary altar set up by Licinius Clemens, *praefectus cohortis I Hamiorum*, at Carvoran under Calpurnius Agricola;¹¹⁷ the same prefect dedicated another altar here but used the other longer title to describe Agricola.¹¹⁸ However, with the known consular governors of the early third century the usage changes: Virius Lupus is twice described as *legatus* and in a third case *consularis* is to be restored;¹¹⁹ the sole inscription of Valerius Pudens refers to him as *consularis*;¹²⁰ Alfenus Senecio, as noted above,¹²¹ is described as *legatus* on two inscriptions and this title is to be

¹¹³ BREEZE-DOBSON 200–6, especially 204, where they cast doubt also on the alleged destructions at Benwell, Rudchester, Haltonchesters, Great Chesters, and Birdoswald; they rightly cast doubt on the position and interpretation of the destruction of a building «without the eastern rampart» at Benwell and point out that there was no damage to the military hospital. For South Shields see JRS 57, 1967, 177.

¹¹⁴ The mithraeum at Carrawburgh had periods of disuse.

¹¹⁵ BREEZE-DOBSON 200, 206; the evidence at Rudchester and Haltonchesters (Britannia 4, 1973, 276) strikingly confirms RIB 1912 (Birdoswald); there are almost no inscriptions of *auxilia* in the second half of the third century from the frontier area.

¹¹⁶ Agricola – lead pipes EE IX 1039; ILS 8704 a; Britannia 2, 1971, 292–3, no. 17, forum JRS 46, 1956, 146–7, no. 3 = AE 1957, 169; Nepos – milecastles RIB 1637, 1638, and restored in 1634, 1666, 1939, 1702, forts 1340, 1427, possible restoration in *tropaemum* 1051; Proculus (?) – 995; Julius Severus 1550 (unless Julius Verus) and restored in 739; anon. – JRS 55, 1965, 222, no. 7 = AE 1965, 217; Urbicus – 1147, 1148, 1276, 2191, 2192; Julius Verus (see also above on 1550) – 283, 1322, 2110, and restored in 1132; Calpurnius Agricola – 1137, 1149, 1792, and restored in 589, 1703, but *cos.* is reading in 1809; Adventus – 1083; anon. – 2212, Britannia 1, 1970, 305–6, no. 3.

¹¹⁷ RIB 1809.

¹¹⁸ RIB 1792.

¹¹⁹ RIB 637, 730; 1163 and apparatus. See also above, note 29; A. R. BIRLEY (1972).

¹²⁰ See above, note 15.

¹²¹ See note 19.

restored on a third¹²² and also as *consularis* on four plus a further two restorations.¹²³ The conclusion is inescapable: statistically in Britain it is most unlikely that the Ulpius Marcellus described as *consularis* on the Benwell altar can be the governor attested in the 180's by Dio; the use of *consularis* – and also simultaneously of *legatus* – is matched perfectly by the early third century governors.¹²⁴

Unfortunately, very little is known about the *ala I Asturum* before the Severan period. It is attested in Britain by the diplomas of 98, 122, 124, 135, and 146.¹²⁵ It is conceivable that it was this *ala* and not its sister regiment that was stationed at Ribchester (Bremetennacum) in the Flavian-Trajanic period¹²⁶ and that the magnificent cavalry parade-helmet¹²⁷ belongs to Caravus, an *eques* of the *ala I Asturum*.¹²⁸

One further inscription mentioning this *ala* may be considered; it comes from Ilipa in Spain.¹²⁹ It was set up to honour an equestrian commander who served in all *tres militiae* in Britain; he was prefect of *cohors II Vasconum equitata*, tribune of *legio II Augusta*, and prefect of *ala I Asturum*. He had a brilliantly successful military career in Britain¹³⁰ and won an unparalleled¹³¹ series of medals and rewards.¹³²

¹²² RIB 740, 746; restored in 1151. RIB 591 and JRS 57, 1967, 205–6, no. 17 = AE 1967, 260 are both Severan and probably belong to the time of Senecio; both have *leg. Augg.* See above, note 14.

¹²³ RIB 1234, 1337, 1909, 1462; certain restorations in 722–3 as revised by ALFÖLDY (1969).

¹²⁴ Unfortunately, only two of the consular governors of Britannia Superior are attested epigraphically in Britain: Rufinus is described as *cos.* (JRS 51, 1961, 191–2, no. 1 (Reculver) = AE 1962, 258; cf. JRS 55, 1965, 220, no. 1 = AE 1962, 258), Juba as *v. c. legatum Augg. pr. pr.* (RIB 334 (Caerleon) = ILS 537). A. R. BIRLEY (1967) 82–5, nos. 39 and 41.

¹²⁵ CIL XVI 43, 69, 70, 82, 93.

¹²⁶ RIB 586. As the apparatus shows, the numeral is by no means certain. CICHORIUS (1894) 1231, followed by most subsequent scholars, was unwilling to say to which of the two *alae* this inscription belonged.

¹²⁷ TOYNBEE 292–3, dating the helmet to c. 100; COLLINGWOOD-RICHMOND pl. XIXn.

¹²⁸ JRS 50, 1960, 240, no. 21, where the name is regarded as possibly Spanish; if correct, this is worth noting as evidence for source of recruiting to the *ala*, though it is always possible that the name may have been inscribed some time later.

¹²⁹ CIL II 1086 = ILS 2712; possibly the first two lines are lost. I am grateful to Dr. VALERIE MAXFIELD for discussion on this difficult inscription.

¹³⁰ The *dona* were apparently awarded on at least four separate occasions, a distinction paralleled only in the literature of the Republican era and hence, in Dr. MAXFIELD's view, the inscription's authenticity must be queried. However, it is hard to think why it might have been forged.

¹³¹ No member of the *tres militiae* (CIL VI 1449 = ILS 1107 was in the *militia quarta* when he received a mural and a rampart crown) is attested ever receiving more than one crown with the exception of C. Julius Karus (AE 1951, 88), a most interesting case. Karus was *praefectus cohortis II Astyrum* [sic] *equitatae* when he received in a British War one

«He was awarded the honours of a mural crown and four gold crowns, also a standard and five silver spearshafts; he was honoured by the armies in which he served with a gilded two-horse chariot and equestrian statues.»

DOMASZEWSKI assigned the inscription to the period of the Claudian conquest,¹³³ but this cannot be correct for various reasons.¹³⁴ The fact that all three commands were held in Britannia, at a time of major campaigning, and that the rewards were made by the armies, not army, surely dates the campaigns firmly to those of Severus and Caracalla, when *legio II Augusta* was in the army of Britannia Superior and *ala I Asturum* was part of the garrison of Britannia Inferior.¹³⁵ It might also be thought that the presence of the emperors¹³⁶ would be needed before such lavish awards could be given by the troops.¹³⁷ Who is this equestrian officer? He is surely the commander of the *ala* when it was awarded the battle honour *praetoria* for its meritorious service. Is it not likely that he is none other than Tineius Longus?

There is only one other inscription in which *felix* is used as a predicate to the unit.¹³⁸ This is part of an inscribed monumental relief discovered in the head-

hasta and three *coronae* (one each of wall, rampart, and gold). The *bellum Britannicum* must date between 89 and 128 (E. BIRLEY [1953 b] 23–4, JARRETT-MANN 181), and the only attested one is that of 117–9.

¹³² Dr. MAXFIELD cites for decorations «awarded» by the troops CIL II 2079 = ILS 2713 with CIL II 3272 of statues, crowns, and shields; CIL XIII 1041 = ILS 2531 of shield, crowns, and gold rings. Both these are early first century before any regular system was in operation; there is still no parallel for the equestrian statues and the two-horse chariot.

¹³³ DOMASZEWSKI (1908) 138, note 1.

¹³⁴ The order of the posts is that of the post-Claudian period; cf. E. BIRLEY (1953 b) 138. *Cohors II Vasconum* was not raised until 68 by Galba (Tacitus, hist. 4, 33; CICHORIUS [1901] 349; ALFÖLDY [1968] 61); it is not attested in Britain until the diploma of 105 (CIL XVI 51), and it may well have been sent with *cohortes II Asturum* after 89 (see note 131). Dr. MAXFIELD kindly points out to me that the *vexillum* did not form part of the *dona* of the equestrians until the Flavian period. It might also be thought that a third century date would be more suitable than a first for a *sevir Augustalis* to be on such socially amicable terms as a highly successful equestrian officer.

¹³⁵ Whether the division was made once in 197 (Herodian) or then but altered in c. 213 (MANN-JARRETT), *legio II Augusta* at Caerleon must always have been based in a different province from *ala I Asturum* at Benwell. The Severi brought so many troops in their expeditionary force that they might almost have been regarded as a third army; cf. A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 252–3; JARRETT-MANN 199; RITTERLING 1316; DAVIES (1976 a).

¹³⁶ If Karus, a commander of a unit of Asturians, was awarded his unprecedented *dona* by Hadrian after successful campaigning resulting in the building of the Wall, this might well be a parallel for the Severi and Longus. For Severus building the Wall see above, note 28, and MANN (1970) nos. 141–6.

¹³⁷ The governor Lucullus was executed allegedly for allowing the troops to have his name for a weapon. Severus, it is stated, planned to execute the troops who had hailed his own son Caracalla Augustus; SHA Sev. 18, 9–10, and above, note 109.

¹³⁸ RIB 1466 = EE III 100 = LS 943. COLLINGWOOD and WRIGHT put the F of *felix* in square brackets, though the remains of the letter seem clear enough.

quarters at Chesters (Cilurnum). The upper part comprises a framed plaque with the inscription:

[S]alvis Aug[[g.]]
felix ala II Astur.
 [[Antoniniana]].

Below this is part of a relief depicting a cavalryman wearing a special ceremonial helmet and carrying a *vexillum*, on which is inscribed *Virtus Aug[[g.]]*.¹³⁹ The second g on both the plaque and the *vexillum* inscriptions and also the title of *Antoniniana* have been erased.

The inscription must belong to the third century, when this unit was stationed here,¹⁴⁰ and at a time when there were two full emperors, one of whom had the cognomen Antoninus. E. BIRLEY, followed by WRIGHT, suggested that they are Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, who reigned jointly in 221–2 and that the erasures were made following the death of the former and the damning of his memory.¹⁴¹ This is an explanation that fits the facts and is highly probable, although it might have been thought that in that case the unit might have replaced the title derived from the name of the former senior emperor with those of the new sole emperor.¹⁴²

However, there are other emperors to whom this could apply. Caracalla was an Antoninus and there are examples of military inscriptions set up in the early third century when Severus and Caracalla were joint emperors, on which the unit is described as *Antoniniana*.¹⁴³ As *felix* never seems to be used in this way elsewhere¹⁴⁴ and as both examples were made by *alae* of the same series in the early third century at a time when there were two Augusti, the possibility must be borne in mind that they may in fact be contemporary.¹⁴⁵ Is it not likely that the

¹³⁹ For the British examples of Roman military ceremonial helmets TOYNBEE 291–7 and above, note 127; Britannia 3, 1972, 320; for a similarly inscribed *vexillum* (but legionary) RIB 2200 and pl. XIX (Duntocher).

¹⁴⁰ See above, notes 9, 35, 48, 94, 97.

¹⁴¹ E. BIRLEY (1939) 243–4; RIB 1466 apparatus.

¹⁴² For example, the deleted names of Geta are often replaced by the additional titles of Caracalla, now sole emperor; A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 271–2.

¹⁴³ E. g. CIL III 11082 (Arrabona, 207): *leg. I Adi. p. f. Antoniniana*; CIL III 14485 a = ILS 9179 (Bumbea, 201): *coh. I Aurelia Brittonum ∞ Antoniniana*; CIL XIII 8825 = ILS 9186 (Roomburgh, c.205): *numero expl. Bat. Antoninianoru[m]*; CIL VIII 9827 = ILS 2493 and VIII 9828 (Sidi Ali ben Yub, 201): *ala I Aug. Parth. Antoninianae*; ILS 9154 (Ravna, pre-211): *coh. II Aurel. Dard. Antoniniana*.

¹⁴⁴ TLL III (1912–26) s. v. *felix* A2 c cites for auxiliary units of the Principate only the *ala Moesica* (see above, note 36) and a gold fibula CIL III 12030,5 (Deutsch-Altenburg): *felices Tun[gri salvo d. n. (?)* referring to the *ala Tungrorum Frontoniana*.

¹⁴⁵ Either 198–209 or 211–2. It is worth noting the alleged death-bed words of Severus: *turbatam rem publicam ubique accepi, pacatam etiam Britannis relinquo, senex et pedibus aeger firmum imperium Antoninis meis relinquens, si boni erunt, imbecillum, si mali* (SHA Sev. 23, 3; cf. 10, 5; 16, 4; 19, 2; Geta 1, passim; 5, 3).

sister unit was allowed to set up a dedication sharing in the honour of the First *ala*? The fact that the welfare of the emperors is stressed would well fit the time of their campaigns in Britain as late as the end of 209¹⁴⁶ – as would the commemoration of their valour¹⁴⁷ – or even 211 when the two brothers were on the long journey to Rome,¹⁴⁸ basking in the glory of their *Victoria Britannica*¹⁴⁹ but unfortunately not at peace with each other.¹⁵⁰ This *ala* could not be allowed the title *praetoria* but prominently displayed the title *Antoniniana* and, it will be noted, in full.¹⁵¹ On the death of Geta the second *g* would be removed from both examples of *Augg.*, as his memory was promptly damned.¹⁵² The *ala* may also have been deprived of the title *Antoniniana* because it had not shown its loyalty convincingly enough to Caracalla.¹⁵³ It is known that many units in the military North of England were not allowed by Caracalla to have the title of honour *Antoniniana* in 212, until they had publicly displayed their full allegiance to Caracalla.¹⁵⁴ There seems in 212 to have been, if not a mutiny, at least signs of dissatisfaction on the part of the British troops that caused Caracalla to force the soldiers to make a public display of their loyalty, to execute the governor Julius Marcus,¹⁵⁵ to diminish the power of the military North by turning it into a *prae*

¹⁴⁶ See above, notes 14 and 17.

¹⁴⁷ *Virtus Augustorum* is frequently celebrated on the coins of the Severi; e. g. COHEN 319, nos. 654–9 (Severus), 452, no. 9 (Caracalla and Geta), 484, no. 196 (Geta); RIC passim; BMC passim. As the indices of COHEN, RIC, and BMC show, Elagabalus never celebrated his *Virtus* on coins nor did Severus Alexander in the early part of his reign.

Moreover, the celebration of the *Virtus Augustorum* here at Chesters should refer to a specific time rather than a general sentiment, as elsewhere in Britain *Virtus* is *Augusta*, not *Augusti* (RIB 845, 2200 and pl. XIX; in RIB 152 = ILS 4920 it goes with *numen* so does not apply).

¹⁴⁸ Cf. RIB 1054 (South Shields) to the *Di Conservatores* for the welfare of Caracalla and Geta *ob reditu(m)* in 211.

¹⁴⁹ E. g. CIL VIII 11018 = ILS 436. For the coins celebrating *Victoria Britannica* of 211 and 212 MANN (1970) nos. 139 and 153 apparatus as interpreted in MANN-JARRETT 64: for the whole series ASKEW 18–26, nos. 37–95 a.

¹⁵⁰ A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 269–70; Herodian 3, 15, 4–8; Dio 78, 1.

¹⁵¹ For *Antoniniana* written out in full see above, notes 34, 143. Possibly there were matching slabs with the names of the other emperors, cf. CIL III 1464 = ILS 1370.

¹⁵² It was erased on all inscriptions in Britain. MANN (1970) no. 98 inadvertently omits the erasures on the Pudens inscription; see above, note 15 and correctly ALFÖLDY (1969) 1 and Taf. 1.

¹⁵³ See above, notes 65 and 69.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid; *pro pietate ac devotione communi*.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid; the deletion of his names on so many inscriptions surely shows that he was executed and his memory damned; A. R. BIRLEY (1967) 87, no. 45. See also above, note 104.

It is worth considering the dedication by the procurator M. Cocceius Nigrinus for the welfare and safety of Caracalla, probably in 212 though a date as late as 217 is possible (RIB 2066 = ILS 9317). E. BIRLEY (1953 a) 61 argued that he was a presidial procurator of Britannia Inferior; however, this is unlikely (cf. GRAHAM 95–100; A. R. BIRLEY (1967)

torian province of Britannia Inferior,¹⁵⁶ to drop the title *Britannicus* from his own nomenclature¹⁵⁷ and possibly to force *legio VI Victrix* also to drop this title of honour.¹⁵⁸ It may be noted that on an altar to *Disciplinae Auggg.*, set up in the fort at Castlesteads (Uxellodunum) in 209–11 to refer to all three emperors, the final two g's were erased and *usti* substituted in 212 to refer to Caracalla alone.¹⁵⁹ On a dedication-slab erected at Chester-le-Street (Congangium)¹⁶⁰ in 216 the title *Antoniniana* was erased from the *ala*'s title, presumably in the following year on Caracalla's own death.¹⁶¹

There is an apparent parallel for one unit being allowed to share in the honour bestowed to reward the glorious conduct of a sister unit. In the early 160's a

78–9, 86, no. 44b). The procurator asserts his loyalty to Caracalla alone in a most unmistakable manner; moreover, he made the vow in the frontier zone, though it might have been expected that the procurator would have been stationed at the capital. Is it not probable that the procurator was being used to check on the loyalty and behaviour of the military commanders, a common practice (cf. FRERE 92, 196–8)? When Marcus was executed, Nigrinus may then temporarily have become *agens vice legati* until the arrival of the replacement governor, probably Gordian, depending on how Caracalla handled the situation. It will not be forgotten that some procurators at an earlier date had been appointed to investigate the property of men suspected and condemned by Severus (A. R. BIRLEY [1971 a] 176, 196–200, 304–6 on Varius Marcellus (cf. PFLAUM 638–42, no. 237); nor that Oclatinus Adventus had earlier been operating in the military North (ibid. 248 and above, note 35). Possibly Nigrinus's predecessor was Q. Volusius Sabinianus (RIB 2132 = ILS 4646 [Musselburgh]), who worships Apollo Grannus, a favourite of Caracalla (RE VII [1912] 1823–7). Is *procurator Augusti* contained in the badly weathered lines of RIB 1911?

¹⁵⁶ Whether Herodian, GRAHAM, or MANN-JARRETT is correct, the number of troops and the power of the governor was never as great as in the second century; cf. A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 270.

¹⁵⁷ See above, note 65.

¹⁵⁸ See above, note 68. Cf. Britannia 5, 1974, 469, no. 56 a. LEG VI] VIC ANT. It may be noted that Marcus Aurelius took the title *Germanicus* in 172 but deliberately dropped it the following year when he believed that the title was no longer worthy of him (A. R. BIRLEY [1966] 234–5, 244). *Legio II Traiana* may have had the title conferred twice but have dropped it in the meantime; see above, note 63.

¹⁵⁹ RIB 1978. This meant that the presence of Severus, *vindex et conditor Romanae disciplinae*, was also removed from the altar. Presumably it was thought that if only the last G was removed as a result of the damning of Geta's memory, that would leave two Augusti on the stone, and the last pair had in fact been Caracalla and Geta. By this erasure and alteration there was no doubt at all! It will be remembered that the deity Sol Invictus was erased on a dedication at Corbridge in 193 presumably to avoid the error of identifying it with the recently damned Commodus (RIB 1137).

¹⁶⁰ RIB 1049.

¹⁶¹ It has naturally been assumed that on the Chesters inscription the erasures of G and *Antoniniana* were in fact simultaneous. This is highly probable though not absolutely necessary, as the *Antoniniana* might have been erased in error at a later date (e. g. 222). The names of Gordian as governor were deleted when he was damned as emperor; A. R. BIRLEY (1967) 87–8, no. 46.

special issue of coins was struck to commemorate *legio VI Ferrata*, currently winning victories against the Parthians, as she had done two hundred years earlier, but now under the personal leadership of the emperor Lucius Verus. Two types of reverse were struck, both depicting legionary standards flanking an eagle over the inscription *leg VI*. However, on one type the standard is surmounted by a figure of the goddess Victoria, and ASKEW made the very attractive suggestion that the intention was to allow *legio VI Victrix* to share in the glory of her sister legion.¹⁶² Thus it would not be unparalleled to suppose that the Chesters unit was allowed to use *felix* too. It is quite possible that the *ala II Asturum* had been in action with successes of her own.¹⁶³

The Spanish provinces provided the Roman army with many excellent fighting men; the Asturians provided three *alae* and many *cohortes* and two of these cavalry regiments and two of the infantry battalions served in Britain.¹⁶⁴ Although the horses were small and with their famous 'trot' tended to be used in the circus, the skill and courage of both rider and mount made them a formidable combination.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, it seems that at one time in the second century in Britain the *ala Tungrorum* was reinforced with Asturian riders to improve the equestrian skills of the unit.¹⁶⁶ Of all these units, however, pride of place must go to the one which distinguished itself so valiantly in the crisis of the early third century in Roman Britain: *ala I Asturum*.

¹⁶² ASKEW 15, no. 29 a, cf. 29 b; A. R. BIRLEY (1971 b) 86. There were troubled times in Britain then, too, and *legio VI Victrix* may have possibly been in action also; *ibid*; *id.* (1966) 160, 165; JARRETT-MANN 191–2; SHA Marcus 8.

¹⁶³ Most, if not all, of the British army must have taken part in the campaigns; Herodian 3, 14, 3–4 and 10 (στρατός, 'army'), cf. Dio 77, 13, 2 for Roman casualties of 50,000, certainly an exaggeration. The gigantic 120 acre (48 ha) and 165 acre (68 ha) camps could have contained most of the British army; cf. A. R. BIRLEY (1971 a) 256–8, and map 3; St. JOSEPH 219–23, 230–33.

¹⁶⁴ RICHMOND (1969) 190–3: 'Spanish Troops in Roman Britain'; cf. RE II (1896) 1863; CICHORIUS (1894) 1230–1; *id.* (1901) 245–8, also citing 'mixed' cohorts; cf. AE 1935, 12 *praef. symmachiariorum Asturum*. *Cohors II Asturum* is attested at Llanio (Bremia) (RIB 407–8, CIL VII 1228), where its men may have used their mining skills; in the third century the unit was at Great Chesters (RIB 1738, CIL VII 1228). *Cohors I Asturum* is also attested in the third century (CIL VIII 9047 = ILS 2767) and is also placed there by the 'Notitia' (see above, note 49). For *ala II Asturum* see E. BIRLEY (1939 a) 251–5.

Two wrong citations of *alae Asturum* must be corrected: on DEMAN 144 see JRS 59, 1969, 235, no. 4 = AE 1969–70, 292 revising RIB 606 (*ala Augusta*); on BREEZE 3 see RIB 2140 = ILS 4628 (*ala Tungrorum*).

¹⁶⁵ Silius Italicus 3, 335–7; Martial 14, 199; Pliny, NH 8, 67.

¹⁶⁶ ALFÖLDY (1968) 82 on CIL XVI 82 (A. D. 135). However, as this is not attested elsewhere, it may be easier to suppose that the clerk inadvertently omitted the numeral and to understand: *I Ast(urum) et (I) Tungr(orum)*. For the magnificent helmet at Ribchester, see above, notes 126–8.

Addendum

Excavation at Wallsend (Segedunum) in 1975 produced in an unstratified context a tile of the *al(a) I A(sturum)* that is very similar to Benwell examples (JRS 16, 1926, 244); perhaps the *ala* was at Wallsend in the later second century and was subsequently moved 10 km west.

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