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Cohors I Aelia Dacorum: A Dacian Unit on Hadrian's Wall

Of all the Roman auxiliary units in the province of *Britannia*, one of the best attested epigraphically is *cohors I Aelia Dacorum*. The unit is the only known Dacian cohort in the province, and was based at the fort of Birdoswald on Hadrian's Wall during the period from the late second century to the end of the fourth century. All but two of the inscriptions which relate to the unit have been found on or close to this site. At Birdoswald, inscriptions have been recorded by archaeologists and antiquaries for a period of 400 years. Of particular importance are two complete building inscriptions and a series of altars dedicated to *Iupiter Optimus Maximus*. At a recent seminar „*Dacia Antiqua*“, which was held at the residence of the Romanian Ambassador in London, I read a brief paper on the history of this unit. I understood from discussions at this event that the data which I presented was not well known in Romania, and I was encouraged by Dr. Alexandru Diaconescu of the Babeş-Bolyai University and Dr. Ian Haynes of Birkbeck College, University of London, to write this rather longer account for these *Acta*. I am grateful to both Prof. Diaconescu and Dr. Haynes, and also to Carmen Ciongradi of the National Museum of Transylvania at Cluj-Napoca, who kindly agreed to act as my contact with the publishers. Dr Haynes has read an earlier draft of this paper and made some useful comments. Any remaining errors or omissions are my own.

This paper will examine the extensive epigraphic and iconographic evidence for the unit, which is also presented in a full catalogue. After a summary of the historiography of the cohort, an attempt will be made to examine the unit's history, its commanders, and what is known about the soldiers and their families. Aspects of the cohort's garrison at Birdoswald will be presented, and the question of the continuity of a sense of Dacian identity within the unit will be addressed.

The first antiquarian description of Birdoswald, and the earliest record of inscriptions of *cohors I Aelia Dacorum*, dates to 1599, when Reginald Bainbrigg braved the lawless and highly dangerous Anglo-Scottish border to explore the Roman Wall. Bainbrigg commented that Birdoswald „must have been some great town, by the great ruynes thereof“, but that the inscriptions on the site were „worn out by the tracte of time, or by the clownishe and rude inhabitants defaced“. Despite this, one stone was legible: an altar, which had been reused in the fabric of „Thomas Tweddaile's house“ on the site (No. 10)². Bainbrigg further transcribed two altars, one found at Birdoswald (No. 5) and the other at or near Willowford (No. 20)³. Bainbrigg's observations were communicated to William Camden, who incorporated them in the 5th edition of his *Britannia*, which was published in 1600. Camden also transcribed two further altars from Willowford which he had noted on his own travels (Nos 13, 21)⁴. By 1733 several more altars had been found, and John Horsley published drawings of 25 stones in his great work *Britannia Romana*⁵, of which thirteen were inscriptions of the Dacian cohort

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² F. Haverfield, *Cotton Iulius F.VI. Notes on Reginald Bainbrigg of Appleby and William Camden, and on Some Roman Inscriptions*, Transactions of the Cumberland Westmorland Antiquarian Archaeological Society, N Ser 11, 1911, 343-378.

³ Ibid.

⁴ W. Camden, *Britannia*⁵, London 1600.

⁵ J. Horsley, *Britannia Romana*², 1733, reprint Newcastle-Upon-Tyne 1974, 252-258.

(Nos 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 13, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29). Horsley also published the first summary of what was then known of the unit:

„COHORS PRIMA AELIA DACORUM. This cohort is mentioned in several inscriptions under different commanders and several emperors at *Birdoswald* upon the wall in the County of *Cumberland*. Some of these inscriptions are as late or later than *Gordianus* and *Maximianus*. In one of these it is stiled GORDIANA. In the *Notitia* it is placed at *Amboglanna*“⁶.

The fact that altars of the cohort had been found at Birdoswald and that the *Notitia Dignitatum* places the unit at *Amboglanna* gave rise to the belief that this was the Roman name for the site. Haverfield⁷ subsequently corrected this to *Camboglanna*, which is how the name appears on two Roman bronze vessels which depict the Wall; the Rudge Cup⁸ and the Amiens *patera*⁹. In 1821, an altar¹⁰ dedicated to Silvanus by the *Venatores Bannienses* was found inside the fort. This suggested that *Banna*, a name which also appears on the Rudge Cup, the Amiens *patera*, and in the *Notitia*, was actually the correct Roman name for Birdoswald. The solution to the problem of the fort's name was found by Hassall¹¹, who recognised that there had been a lacuna in an early version of the *Notitia*, and restored the relevant section from:

Tribunus cohortis primae Aeliae Dacorum, Amboglanna
to:

Tribunus cohortis primae Aeliae Dacorum, [Banna
Tribunus cohortis secundae Tungrorum], Amboglanna

Camboglanna should thus be located at Castlesteads, the fort to the west of Birdoswald, where *cohort II Tungrorum* is attested epigraphically¹², and the identification of Birdoswald with *Banna* is now generally accepted.

The inscriptions found during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were scattered, and many are now lost (Nos. 3, 6, 7, 8, 13, 22, 27, 33). Some (Nos. 5, 6, 19, 20, 27, 29) went to Naworth Castle, the seat of the Earls of Carlisle, where Horsley recorded several examples as „long exposed to the weather and suffered greatly by that means“. These had been collected in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century by Lord William (Belted Will) Howard of Naworth, whose antiquarian enthusiasm was not shared by his successors. Other altars were preserved at Rokeby Castle and are still there (Nos. 5, 20, 21), while two are in the summerhouse at Castlesteads (Nos. 9, 25). Two were reused during the medieval period, and were rediscovered built into Lanercost Priory in 1744 (No. 18) and Scaleby church in 1861 (No. 16). The acquisition of Birdoswald by Henry Norman, a man of great archaeological interests, in the mid-nineteenth century, resulted in the formation of a significant collection of material from the site in one of the farm buildings, which

⁶ J. Horsley (n. 5), 88.

⁷ F. Haverfield, *The Roman Name Of Birdoswald Fort*, Transactions of the Cumberland Westmorland Antiquarian Archaeological Society, N Ser 18, 1918, 223-229.

⁸ RIB 2415.53; CIL VII 1291; J. Horsley (n. 5), 329-331.

⁹ J. Heurgon, *The Amiens Patera*, JRS 41, 1951, 22-24.

¹⁰ RIB 1905.

¹¹ M. W. C. Hassall, *Britain in the Notitia*, in Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum (eds. R. Goodburn, P. Bartholomew), BAR S15, Oxford 1976, 103-117.

¹² RIB 1981-83.

Norman called his „Altarhouse“. The collection was studied and published by Haverfield¹³, who also noted two inscriptions (Nos. 19, 30) built into the walls of the farm at Birdoswald where they remain, one having been rediscovered in 1990. Henry Norman's son, Oswald, sold the Birdoswald estate in 1901, and fortunately sold his father's collection in its entirety to the Tullie House Museum in Carlisle. The modern travels of the inscriptions are an interesting study beyond the scope of this paper, but the fates of two make an interesting contrast. The first to be recorded (No. 10) remained on site until the twentieth century. It was noted built into a building on the site by Bainbrigg in 1599¹⁴, seen at Birdoswald by Horsley in 1733¹⁵ and recorded there again during the second Pilgrimage of Hadrian's Wall in 1886. It was in Henry Norman's Altarhouse collection¹⁶, sold by Oswald Norman in 1901, and is now in Tullie House Museum. No. 26 on the other hand was found in around 1694, moved to Scaleby Castle by 1733, where Horsley saw it¹⁷, and moved again to Godalming in the south-east of England, some 400km from the site, where it was rediscovered in 1923. It too ended up in Tullie House Museum¹⁸.

Archaeological excavation began at Birdoswald in the 1850s, when Henry Norman invited H. G. and W. S. Potter to excavate the fort gates. In 1852 the main east gate was virtually totally excavated and the major building inscription, No. 2, was recovered (Pl. 3, 1). This extremely fine slab is dated to AD 219, when Modius Julius was governor of the province of *Britannia Inferior*, and must relate to the major repair works on the gate which have been detected archaeologically¹⁹. *Cohors I Aelia Dacorum*, the builders, were commanded by the *tribunus* Claudius Menander. The most remarkable aspect of this discovery is the decoration flanking the inscription itself. This consists of a motif, which perhaps represents a palm or olive branch on the left side and a curved sword on the right. The sword, as John Collingwood Bruce was quick to recognise²⁰ „from the bas-reliefs of that renowned erection“, Trajan's Column, is a *falx*, the traditional Dacian weapon. *Falces* appear in frequent portrayals on Trajan's Column in Rome, and on the metopes of the *Tropaeum Traiani* at Adamklissi. In 1929 further excavations on the site took place under F. G. Simpson, E. B. Birley and I. A. Richmond²¹. During this work, another major building inscription was found (No. 1; Pl. 3, 2) reused in a fourth century floor. Though badly worn, this inscription could be read. It commemorated the erection of an *horreum* by the Dacian cohort under Aurelius Julianus, assisted by a *cohors I Thracum c. R.* This inscription, like that at the east gate, is flanked by a frond and a *falx*.

There has been much discussion on the origin of the cohort. Holder²², Petolescu²³ and Jarrett²⁴ have all suggested that *cohors I Aelia Dacorum* was originally raised very

¹³ F. Haverfield, *Inscriptions Preserved At Birdoswald*, Transactions of the Cumberland Westmorland Antiquarian Archaeological Society, O Ser 15, 1898, 197-200.

¹⁴ F. Haverfield (n. 2).

¹⁵ J. Horsley (n. 5), 253.

¹⁶ RIB 1981-83.

¹⁷ J. Horsley (n. 5), 256.

¹⁸ R. P. Wright, E. J. Phillips, *Roman Inscribed and Sculpted Stones in Carlisle Museum*, Carlisle 1975, 21.

¹⁹ T. Wilmott, *Birdoswald Excavations of a Roman Fort on Hadrian's Wall and its Successor Settlements; Excavations 1987-92*, English Heritage Archaeological Reports 14, London 1997, 189-91.

²⁰ J. C. Bruce, *The Roman Wall*³, Newcastle 1867, 297.

²¹ I. A. Richmond, E. B. Birley, *Excavations on Hadrian's Wall in the Birdoswald-Pike Hill Sector, 1929*, Transactions of the Cumberland Westmorland Antiquarian Archaeological Society, N Ser, 30, 1930, 169-205.

²² P. A. Holder, *The Roman Army in Britain*, London 1982, 70.

²³ C. C. Petolescu, *Dacii în armata romană*, Revista de Istorie 33, 1980.

²⁴ M. G. Jarrett, *Non-Legionary Troops in Roman Britain: Part One, The Units*, Britannia 25, 1994, 35-77.

soon after the conquest of Dacia by Trajan, and was probably transferred almost immediately to Britain. Spaul disagrees, believing that if this was the case the cohort would have been designated *Ulpia*, on the model of the cohort attested in Syria, the *cohors I Ulpia Dacorum*. He favours the idea that the cohort was raised under Domitian as a quingenary unit, after his Dacian wars²⁵. The cohort worked on the building of the Vallum of Hadrian's Wall under Hadrian, as attested by a building stone recording the century of Aelius Dida of *cohors I Dacorum* (No. 34), found near Benwell. Their first known garrison was at Bewcastle where they are again attested simply as *cohors I Dacorum* (No. 35). The editors of RIB suggest that the Bewcastle inscription is Hadrianic because *Aelia* is omitted. Jarrett²⁶ suggests that the title was a battle honour, though it has been suggested that units may have received such honorifics when milliary status was granted²⁷. Spaul's idea is that this occurred during the move of the cohort from Bewcastle to Birdoswald but, as we will see, it is highly unlikely that this took place under Hadrian. If the fort at Bewcastle was built for this cohort²⁸, then the large size of the fort clearly suggests that the unit already had a milliary establishment, despite the lack of any milliary indication on No. 35. Holder²⁹ has demonstrated that the issue has been solved by the diploma of 20th August AD 127, which gives the style *coh(ors) I Ael(ia) Dac(or)um (milliaria)*, including the milliary symbol. He suggests that the men discharged in AD 127 were recruited in AD 102 or a little earlier, perhaps from Dacians settled within the Empire. Those discharged would have been part of the cadre around which the unit was originally formed. They would have included the Dacian soldier who received the diploma, one Itaxa, son of Stamilla (*ITAXAE STAMILLAE F DACO*)³⁰. The award by Hadrian of the epithet *Aelia* might have been a battle honour awarded on the lower Danube, alternatively the unit may have originated as a *numerus Dacorum* under Trajan, and been made a *cohors* by his successor. Though Holder further suggests³¹ that the cohort accompanied Hadrian to Britain on his visit in AD 122, the fact that the cohort achieved the title and milliary status before AD 127 at the latest, does not automatically mean that either or both of these were granted before the unit came to Britain.

It is not known how long the cohort served at Bewcastle, though it is likely that it did not appear at Birdoswald until the late second or early third century, as we will see. For the middle and later second century it is referred to on two diplomas and an inscription. On the diplomas of AD 146³² and AD 158³³, no milliary symbol is given. However, the diploma of AD 146 does not give a milliary symbol for other units which are known to have been of this strength, such as *cohors I Fida Vardullorum milliaria*. This does not mean that these units were not milliary, and Birley³⁴ has noted that only

²⁵ J. Spaul, *Cohors²: The Evidence for, and a Short History of the Auxilliary Infantry Units Of The Imperial Roman Army*, BAR Int. Ser. 841, Oxford 2000, 345-346.

²⁶ C. C. Petolescu (n. 23).

²⁷ V. A. Maxfield, *The Military Decorations Of The Roman Army*, London 1981, 234; also by J. Spaul (n. 25).

²⁸ P. S. Austen, *Bewcastle and Old Penrith, a Roman Outpost Fort and a Frontier Vicus: Excavations 1977-78*, Cumberland Westmorland Antiq Archaeol Soc Res Ser. 6, Kendal 1991, 43-44.

²⁹ P. A. Holder, *Auxiliary Units Entitled Aelia*, ZPE 122, 1998, 255-257.

³⁰ J. Nollé, *Militärdiplom für einen in Britannien entlassenen "Daker"*, ZPE 117, 1997, 269-276.

³¹ J. Nollé, op. cit., 262.

³² CIL XVI 93.

³³ P. A. Holder, *A Roman Military Diploma From Ravenglass, Cumbria*, Bull. John Rylands Library Manchester 79, 3-41.

³⁴ E. B. Birley, *Alae and cohortes milliariae*, in *Corolla Memoriae Erich Swoboda Dedicata, Römische Forschungen in Niederösterreich*, Graz 1966, 61.

in *diplomata* where some units are referred to specifically as milliary should the absence of such a reference for other units recorded as milliary elsewhere be considered significant. Holder suggests that the cohort was reduced in size by the detachment of a vexillation, and that this is also the reason for the lack of any milliary reference on the two diplomas. This author reached a similar conclusion to account for the fact that no milliary symbol appears on any of the third century *IOM* altars³⁵, and yet the commanders are almost always *tribuni*. Margaret Roxan has suggested that the symbol might be omitted simply because the status of the unit was well enough known and established for its use to be unnecessary. The only epigraphic source to accord the cohort its full style, *coh(ortis) mil(liaria) Ael(ia) Dacor(um)* is from Lambaesis in Libya. This gives the career of the equestrian officer Ti. Claudius Proculus Cornelianus, who served his *militia secunda* as *tribunus* of the cohort, probably during the reign of Antoninus Pius³⁶. The peculiarity of this inscription is that it omits the numeral, though there is little doubt that our cohort is referred to.

The earliest of the inscriptions of *cohors I Aelia Dacorum* from Birdoswald may be No. 19, an altar which was rediscovered in 1990. This records a *tribunus* called Domitius Honoratus. Roger Tomlin³⁷ has suggested that if this was L. Domitius Honoratus, prefect of Egypt under Severus Alexander, his tribunate would have been around the reign of Septimius Severus. This can, however, not be much earlier than the *horreum* building inscription found during 1929 (No. 1), which dates to AD 205-208. The construction of the *horrea* within the fort was part of a very major late first and early second century building programme at Birdoswald, which also saw the alteration of the troops' accommodation. The north-western barrack was divided into two buildings. The men's quarters, divided into *contubernia*, remained largely unaltered, but the centurion's quarters in the projecting section at the west end was detached to form a separate square suite of rooms, including a private privy, and at least one room which was equipped with a hypocaust³⁸. It seems likely that these widespread changes might have been occasioned by the arrival of a new unit, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the unit concerned was the Dacian cohort. Spaul's³⁹ argument that the cohort took part in the initial construction of the stone fort is based on his interpretation of No. 30, a centurial stone. The fact that this was found *ex situ*, reused in the wall of Birdoswald farmhouse, invalidates Spaul's interpretation.

The unit, and the names of many of its commanders (all either *tribuni* or centurions in temporary command), appear on a large series of altars dedicated to *Iupiter Optimus Maximus*. It has long been suggested⁴⁰ that they originate from a ceremonial burial deposit on the parade ground. The group seems to be a dispersed example of a deposit of altars of a kind found *in situ* at Maryport⁴¹. It was originally thought that the altars were dedicated as part of the official religious observances of

³⁵ T. Wilmott (n. 19), 196.

³⁶ H.- G. Pflaum, *Deux carrières équestres de Lambèse et de Zana*, *Lybica* 3, 1955, 123-54; idem, *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire Romain*, Paris 1961; *AE* 1956, 123.

³⁷ R. S. O. Tomlin, II. *Inscriptions*, in S. S. Frere, R. S. O. Tomlin, *Roman Britain in 1990*, *Britannia* 22, 1991, 309.

³⁸ T. Wilmott, *Birdoswald*, in P. Bidwell (Ed.), *Hadrian's Wall, 1989-1999*, Newcastle Upon Tyne 1999, 151-154.

³⁹ M. G. Jarrett (n. 24).

⁴⁰ R. W. Davies, *The Training Grounds of the Roman Cavalry*, *AJ* 125, 1968, 79.

⁴¹ RIB 815-837; L. P. Wenham, *The Garrisoning Of Maryport*, *Transactions of the Cumberland Westmorland Antiquarian Archaeological Society*, N Ser 39, 1939, 19-30; M. G. Jarrett, G. R. Stephens, *The Roman Garrisons Of Maryport*, *Transactions of the Cumberland Westmorland Antiquarian Archaeological Society*, N Ser 87, 1987, 62.

the garrison, on the fort's parade ground at the *votorum nuncupatio* each year on January 3rd. Honourable burial would either take place on the dedication of the new altar, or at a periodical *lustrum*. Of the Birdoswald group, many altars were found either reused in the fort or further afield, but five were found to the east of the fort at Willowford (Nos. 4, 13, 20, 21, 22), and one at nearby Underheugh (No. 23) (Pl. 3, 1). Two of these altars, one (No. 17) found in the cliff above Underheugh, and the other ploughed up 'nearer to milecastle 49 than to Birdoswald fort' (No. 11), may have been found in their original positions⁴². The Maryport parallel has been invoked to suggest that the Birdoswald altars came from a parade ground, and that this lay between the Wall and the river on the east side of the fort⁴³. This area, however, was limited in extent by the river and the Wall, and the interpretation of a parade ground site here has never been very satisfactory. Recent geophysical survey has not supported the idea but has, on the contrary, suggested the existence of a parade ground to the north of the Wall, near the north gate of the fort⁴⁴. The context of the location of the Maryport altars, which were found in 1870 buried in pits, has recently been questioned⁴⁵ as there is no evidence for a parade ground in the vicinity of their discovery. Again a parade ground has been identified in a different place, this time to the south of the fort. Peter Hill⁴⁶ has invoked the parallels of rows of altars found in military shrines at Osterburken and Sirmium to suggest a similar context for the Maryport altars. David Breeze⁴⁷ has concurred, concluding that the Maryport altars were located near a shrine to Jupiter, burial being practised when the available space had been filled, in order to allow for the erection of new altars. A similar context is more logical for the Birdoswald group also. The location of the reused altars, focused on Underheugh and Willowford (Pl. 1, 2), together with the discovery of two examples *in situ* near to milecastle 49, and in the cliff above Underheugh is suggestive. Firstly it is likely that shrine was located near milecastle 49, and secondly that the altar deposit has been severely eroded by the retreating river cliff, allowing altars to fall down slope and to be reused in the nearby farm. The possibility that further altars remain to be found in this area, however, is a strong one.

The relationship of the Maryport altars to official „State Religion“ has also been questioned by John Mann⁴⁸. He emphasises that the dedication of the altars by army units and their commanders were individual or corporate personal actions, and that this explains the examples of altars which were either dedicated by the unit without mentioning the commander or *vice versa*. Of the other two religious inscriptions from Birdoswald, which are not dedicated to *IOM*, the inscription on a statue base to the *Signis et Numini Augusti* (No. 28) may have come from a statue in the *aedes* of the *principia*. The dedication to Mars (No. 27) by a military unit requires no comment.

The altars (Table 1) cover the whole of the third century. As discussed, the earliest may be No. 19, which gives the name of Domitius Honoratus. If so, there is evidence for two Severan *tribuni*, the other being Aurelius Julianus, who built the

⁴² C. M. Daniels (ed.), *The Eleventh Pilgrimage of Hadrian's Wall*, Newcastle Upon Tyne 1978, 198.

⁴³ P. Bidwell, N. Holbrook, *Hadrian's Wall Bridges*, Hbmce Archaeol Reps 9, London 1989, 85, 95.

⁴⁴ J. A. Biggins, J. Robinson, D. J. A. Taylor, *Birdoswald Geophysical Survey*, in P. Bidwell (ed.), *Hadrian's Wall 1989-1999*, Newcastle Upon Tyne 1999, 155-157.

⁴⁵ D. J. Breeze, *The Regiments Stationed at Maryport and Their Commanders*, in J. R. A. Wilson (ed.), *Roman Maryport and Its Setting: Essays in Memory of Michael Jarrett*, Kendal 1997, 68-69.

⁴⁶ P. R. Hill, *The Maryport Altars; Some First Thoughts*, in J. R. A. Wilson (ed.), *Roman Maryport And Its Setting: Essays In Memory Of Michael Jarrett*, Kendal 1997, 92-104.

⁴⁷ M. G. Jarrett, G. R. Stephens (n. 41), 70.

⁴⁸ J. C. Mann, *A Note On The Maryport Altars*, in J. R. A. Wilson (ed.), *Roman Maryport And Its Setting: Essays In Memory Of Michael Jarrett*, Kendal 1997, 90-92.

horreum between AD 205-208 (No. 1). During Julianus' tribunate at Birdoswald his son, Aurelius Concordius, died at the age of one year and five days and was buried in the fort cemetery (No. 31)⁴⁹. Subsequent altars can be dated by the imperial honorific titles granted to the unit, and one (No. 5) by reference to a consulship (Table 1). In addition to the altars, the building inscription from the *porta principalis dextra* (No. 2) records the cohort working in AD 219 under the *tribunus* Claudius Menander. The latest inscription is an altar dated by the imperial honorific title *Probiana* to AD 276-282 (No. 11).

All but one of the datable inscriptions recording the name of the cohort give *tribuni* as commanding officers, and the names of seventeen of these are now known. The latest datable inscription from the site (RIB 1912), a building dedication of AD 297-305 which does not specifically name the cohort, gives one Flavius Martinus, a centurion, as the *praepositus* in temporary command. The single inscription of the cohort from its previous base at Bewcastle (No. 35) records that it was under the temporary command of an un-named centurion of *legio II Augusta*. Two other centurions in such positions are listed on the Birdoswald *cohors I Aelia Dacorum* altars; Aurelius Saturninus (No. 13), and Iulius Marcellinus of *legio II Augusta* (No. 17). A fragmentary altar (RIB 1907) upon which the cohort name is not apparent (and which therefore does not appear in the catalogue) records L. Vereius Fortunatus of *legio VI Victrix Pia Fidelis* who may be in an analogous position to Saturninus and Marcellinus. Marcellinus' appointment affords one of two known examples of centurions from *Britannia Superior* being employed in the northern province⁵⁰. During the reign of Maximinus Thrax (AD 235-238), the cohort was under the command of a former *evocatus* of the First Praetorian Cohort, Flavius Maximianus (No. 4). Command of an auxiliary unit for a praetorian is by no means unprecedented in Britain as well as elsewhere, and three such commanders were stationed at various times at Bewcastle⁵¹. Such postings were an alternative to promotion to the position of legionary centurion⁵². Although most of the inscriptions are to *IOM* alone, the ex-Praetorian dedicates to *Iovi Optimo Maximo Dolicheno*. This may reflect a personal devotion to this eastern aspect of Jupiter, and it is not stretching the evidence to suggest that Maximianus might have formed such devotion during his service in Rome. He does, however, dedicate the altar on behalf of the cohort, and this seems to demonstrate a personal, but corporate, dedication of the kind suggested by Mann. The precise date of AD 237 for No. 5, with its consular date, demonstrates that the *tribunus* Aurelius Faustus was probably Maximianus' direct successor, and that the former praetorian thus commanded in AD 235-236. The un-named commander who dedicated for *cohors I Aelia Dacorum Gordiana* (AD 238-244) (No. 6) would surely have been Faustus' direct successor. Another group of more closely dateable altars appear some two decades later. Marcius Gallicus, the only case where we have two dedications by one commander, dedicates once to *IOM* alone (No. 9), and once to *IOM et numini Augusti* (No. 8). It is interesting that the first of these uses the honorific title *Postumiana* for the cohort, while the second does not. The lack of the title on an altar which is also, uniquely in this series, dedicated to the *numini Augusti*, is surely significant. It seems likely that Gallicus' command spanned the period of Postumus'

⁴⁹T. Wilmott, *The Roman Cremation Cemetery in New Field, Birdoswald*, Transactions of the Cumberland Westmorland Antiquarian Archaeological Society N Ser 93, 79-85.

⁵⁰P. A. Holder (n. 22).

⁵¹C. C. Petolescu (n. 23), 47.

⁵²D. J. Breeze, *The Organisation of the Career Structure of Immunes and Principales of the Roman Army*, BJ 174, 1974, 251-254.

usurpation and that No. 8 should be dated to shortly before AD 259, when the succession was in doubt, and No. 9 shortly after. If this was the case, then Gallicus' successor, might have been Probius Augendus (No. 7), who also dedicates for *cohors I Aelia Dacorum Postumiana*. It may be significant in terms of context that the two Postumian altars were found together '100 yds east of Birdoswald', though this context remains obscure. Spaull⁵³ suggests that the only altar which gives the cohort the title *Augusta* (No. 14) may have been dedicated at a similar time of dispute over the succession, possibly around AD 268-270.

Catalogue No	Commanders	Honorific/dating	Date
3		ANTONINIANA	AD 213-222
4	Flavius Maximianus	MAXIMINIANA	AD 235-238
5	Aurelius Faustus	cos Perpetuus [+Cornelianus]	AD 237
6		GORDIANA	AD 238-244
8	Marcus Gallicus		?c. AD 258-259
9	Marcus Gallicus	POSTUMIANA	AD 259-268
7	Probius Augendus	POSTUMIANA	AD 259-268
10	Pomponius Desideratus	TETRICIANORUM	AD 270-273
11	Aurelius Verinus	PROBIANA	AD 276-282

Table 1. Summary of dated *IOM* altars from Birdoswald in probable chronological order.

If Holder's view of the origin of the cohort is correct, it had been in Britain for several generations by the time it is first recorded at Birdoswald, and it would have been normal practice to make up numbers from the local British population⁵⁴. Despite the probability that this occurred within *cohors I Aelia Dacorum*, there is clear evidence that the Dacian character was not entirely dissipated, and was certainly not forgotten. The evidence for this is twofold. Firstly the appearance of *falces* on the two building inscriptions (Figs. 2, 3), and secondly the use of Dacian personal names. The use of the *falx* in this epigraphic context is unique to the Birdoswald inscriptions, and this writer is not aware of any other case where ethnic weaponry is displayed on inscriptions of auxiliary units. Whether this was merely a regimental badge, or whether it depicts part of the actual equipment of the cohort is not known. John Coulston's⁵⁵ discussions of this issue come to no clear conclusion, though he favours the idea of a regimental badge. He does, however, raise an interesting potential parallel; that of the Gurkha troops whose regiments form an integral part of the modern British army. These soldiers have been recruited into regiments under British officers from the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal since 1816⁵⁶, and their most recent combat role was as part of the task force in the Anglo-Argentinian conflict over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) in 1982. The Gurkhas have a traditional edged weapon - a fearsome curved knife known as the *kukri* - with which they are still equipped on parade, in combat, and in their martial dances which are performed at military displays. Every Gurkha regiment has as its badge a pair of crossed *kukris*. To press

⁵³ M. G. Jarrett (n. 24).
⁵⁴ B. Dobson, J. C. Mann, *The Roman Army in Britain and Britons in the Roman Army*, Britannia 4, 1973, 191-205.
⁵⁵ J. C. N. Coulston, *A Sculptured Dacian Falx from Birdoswald*, Archaeol Aeliana 5 Ser, 9, 1981, 348-350; J. C. N. Coulston, E. J. Phillips, *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani*: Great Britain 16. Hadrian's Wall West of the North Tyne, and Carlisle, Oxford 1987, 106.
⁵⁶ P. Mason, *A Matter of Honour. An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men*, London 1974, 137.

this parallel is, however, probably taking the comparison between British India and the Roman Empire too far⁵⁷.

The second piece of evidence for an ethnic Dacian character at Birdoswald is the presence of at least one Dacian name. In 1752 a tombstone was found to the west of the fort, where the fort cemetery lies (No. 32). This was set up to the memories of two children, Decibalus, who lived only a few days, and Blaesus. The Dacian origin of the name Decibalus is obvious, and it seems likely that the father of the two boys was, therefore, a Dacian soldier. Unfortunately the tombstone is very plain, and shows no design which might be dated stylistically⁵⁸. The presence of this tombstone at Birdoswald shows that it is likely to have been late second or early third century in date at the earliest, as that is when the Dacian cohort probably arrived. The fact that Decibalus died after only days of life further shows that the name was *given* at this time. It was tenuously suggested⁵⁹ at the seminar that two further names were Dacian in origin. These were centurions; Aelius Dida (No. 34) was in charge of the century building the Vallum at Benwell. This was a Hadrianic building operation, and the use of the name Aelius suggests a centurion who had been granted citizenship rather recently, though this may fit happily with the notion that the cohort came to Britain with Hadrian. The second is Decius Saxa (No. 30), who appears on a centurial stone at Birdoswald⁶⁰.

The *falx* inscriptions and the Decibalus tombstone are the sole evidence which definitely indicates some kind of ethnic Dacian influence at Birdoswald. The *falx* inscriptions are internally dated to the early third century, while the date of the Decibalus tombstone is inferred from the probable arrival date of the cohort at this time. The inscriptions show Dacian identity being asserted about a century after the unit was raised, and therefore after one might assume several drafts of new, local recruits had taken place. All of the original Dacian recruits must have been discharged by the time of the diploma of 127, the generation of the veteran Itaxa. If the cohort arrived at Birdoswald around 200, then Decibalus' father can hardly have been one of the original, Trajanic, founder-recruits of the cohort. This is the best of evidence we have for the possibility of continued recruitment from the Dacian homeland, but it must be treated with caution. It remains possible that the name was given by a local recruit as a nod to the heritage of the unit.

There is no other evidence for Dacian recruitment to this cohort into the third century. Excavation of around 21% of the fort interior has provided no evidence of any sort of characteristic material culture, which might have identified the cohort as „different“. One place where one might expect this to be apparent is in the fort cemetery, but excavation here has hitherto been extremely small in scale⁶¹. In the third century, the fort at Brougham in north-western England was the base of the *Numerus equitum Stratonicianorum*⁶². The report on the excavation of its cemetery is

⁵⁷ Cf. R. Hingley, *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen: The Imperial Origins of Roman Archaeology*, London 2000, 159-160.

⁵⁸ J. C. N. Coulston, E. J. Phillips (n. 55), 92.

⁵⁹ By Prof. Nantris.

⁶⁰ This author is no linguist. Whether or not these names are Dacian in origin awaits expert comment. A. Mocsy et al., *Nomenclator Provinciarum Europae Latinarum et Gallia Cisalpinae, Dissertationes Pannonicae*, Ser 3, 1, Budapest 1983, lists one other example of the name Saxa, from Gallia Lugdunensis, and Dida twice in Gallia Cisalpina, and once each in Hispania, Gallia Belgica or Germania and Moesia.

⁶¹ T. Wilmott (n. 49), 79-85; T. Wilmott, forthcoming, *Excavation and Survey at Birdoswald, 1996-2000*, English Heritage Archaeological Reports, London.

⁶² RIB 780; C. C. Petolescu (n. 23).

approaching publication, and Hilary Cool has demonstrated that the foreign, in this case Danubian, character of these troops and their dependants would have been very clear from their dress and personal adornment⁶³. There is no evidence that this was true of *cohors I Aelia Dacorum*. Having said that, the very uniqueness of the device of the *falx* and the palm frond is characteristic enough, and the possibility cannot be dismissed that the father of Decibalus was a Dacian recruited to a specialist unit armed with the *falx*⁶⁴. The only way of proving this would be to find such a weapon in excavation.

If Dacian recruitment really was the case up to the early third century, it probably stopped very soon after, as the *falx* appears on none of the *IOM* altars throughout the third century. The final reference to *cohors I Aelia Dacorum* is in the *Notitia Dignitatum*. This later fourth century list of offices and units in the empire shows at least that a unit called *cohors I Aelia Dacorum* was still in garrison at Birdoswald. However, even if Dacian recruitment had survived into the early third century, there is no evidence at all that this continued throughout the century. It would not, in any case, have survived the abandonment of the *tria Daciae* at the end of the third century. One must conclude that during the fourth century cohort was certainly a locally recruited unit of *limitanei* which was similar to the others on Hadrian's Wall: a unit whose ethnic heritage was only discernible in its name.

Catalogue

The catalogue which follows is almost entirely derived from *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain* (RIB) by Collingwood and Wright (1965), and the researcher in detail is referred to that volume for full bibliographic references to each stone. Here the RIB number will be given with the CIL number where relevant, the text and English translation from RIB, together with the date of the earliest record of the stone, the present location, and the date of the piece where known. This is not an exhaustive list of all inscriptions from Birdoswald, but only those from Birdoswald and elsewhere which mention actually or by inference *cohors I Aelia Dacorum*.

Building dedication stones

1. RIB 1909.

Imp(eratoribus) Caes(aribus) L(ucio)/ Sept(imio) Severo Pio/ Pert(inaci) et M(arco) Aur(elio) A[nt]o/nino Aug(ustis) [et P(ublio) Sep(timio) Getae no(bilissimo) Caes(ari)] hor(reum) fecer(unt) coh(ortes) I Ael(ia)/ Dac(orum) et I T(h)racum C(ivium) R(omanorum) sub/ Alfeno Senecione co(n)s(ulari) per Aurel(ium) Iulianum Tr(ibunum).

For the Emperor Caesars Lucius Septimius Severus Pius Pertinax and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, both Augusti [and for Publius Septimius Geta, most noble Caesar], the first Aelian cohort of Dacians and the first cohort of Thracians, Roman citizens, built a granary under Alfenus Senecio, the consular governor, through the agency of Aurelius Julianus the tribune. The erased area which is reconstructed in the above reading in square brackets, marks the *damnatio memoriae* of Geta following his murder by his brother, Caracalla.

⁶³ H. Cool, forthcoming, The Roman Cemetery At Brougham, Cumbria.

⁶⁴ At least one Roman re-enactment enthusiast is sufficiently convinced of this to have so equipped himself!

AD 205-208: Alfenus Senecio Governor of *Britannia*.

Found reused as a floor slab in a fourth century building in the eastern praetentura of the fort during excavations by I. A. Richmond and E. B. Birley in 1929⁶⁵. Now at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

2. RIB 1914; CIL VII 838.

Sub Modio lu/lio leg(ato) Aug(usti) pr(o)/ pr(aetore) coh(ors) I Aelia D(a)c(or)um/ cui praeest M(arcus)/ Cl(audius Menander/ trib(unus):

Under Modius Julius, the Emperor's pro-praetorian legate, the first Aelian cohort of Dacians (built this) under the command of Marcus Claudius Menander, the tribune.

Found at the main east gate during excavations by the Potter brothers in 1852⁶⁶. Now in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

AD 219: Modius Julius, governor of *Britannia Inferior*.

IOM Altars**Dated****3. RIB 1892; CIL VII 818.**

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I Aelia/ Dac(or)um) Anto(niniana)/[.....

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians styled Antoniniana (set this up).

AD 213-22

Found before 1727 at Birdoswald⁶⁷. Now lost.

4. RIB 1896; CIL VII 810.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)[D(olicheno)]/ coh(ors) I A[el(ia)] Dac(or)um)]/ c(ui) p(rae)est/ Flavi[us Ma]/ximia[nus]/ trib(unus) ex [euoc(ato) c(ohortis)]/ I pr(aetoriae) Ma[xiin(ianae)

To Jupiter Best and Greatest of Doliche, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians (set this up) under the command of Flavius Maximianus, tribune, formerly *evocatus* of the First Praetorian Cohort, styled Maximiniana.

AD 235-238. Maximinus Thrax, emperor.

Found before 1732 built into the courtyard wall at Willowford and described in a letter Now at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

5. RIB 1875; CIL VII 808.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ [co]h(ors) I Ael(ia)/ Dac/[or]um]/ c(ui) p(rae)est/ [A]urelius Fa(u)s/[t]us trib(unus)/ Perpetuo/ co(n)s(ule).

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians (set this up) under the command of Aurelius Faustus, tribune, in the consulship of Perpetuus.

AD 237. Perpetuus and Cornelianus, consuls.

Found in or before 1599 and taken to Rokeby where it now is. Described by Reginald Bainbrigg⁶⁸.

⁶⁵ I. A. Richmond, E. B. Birley (n. 21), 169-205.

⁶⁶ H. G. Potter, *Amboglanna: Communicated to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Dec. 1852*, *Archaeol Aeliana* 1, Ser. 4, 1855, 141-149.

⁶⁷ A. Gordon, *Itinerarium Septentrionale*, Edinburgh 1726, 80, Pl Xlvii.

⁶⁸ F. Haverfield (n. 2).

6. RIB 1893; CIL VII 819.

l(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I Ael(ia)/Dac(or)um Gordi/ana c(ui) p(rae)est/ [.....]

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians styled Gordiana under the command of

AD 238-244. Gordian, emperor.

Seen by Bainbrigg at Birdoswald⁶⁹, subsequently at Naworth, then Rokeby. Now lost.

7. RIB 1886; CIL VII 822.

l(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I Ael(ia)/ Dacor[um]/ Postum[i]/ana c(ui) p(rae)est/ Prob(ius) Av/gendus/ trib(unus)

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians styled Postumiana (set this up) under the command of Probius Augendus, tribune.

AD 259-68. Postumus, Gallic emperor.

Found in 1746 with No. 8, 100 yds east of Birdoswald fort (Gent Mag xvi 1746). Now lost.

8. RIB 1882; CIL VII 821.

l(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ et N(umini) Aug(usti)/ coh(ors) I Ael(ia)/ Dac(or)um c(ui) p(rae)est) M/ Gallicus/ trib(unus)

To Jupiter Best and Greatest and to the Deity of the Emperor, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians (set this up) under the command of Marcius Gallicus, tribune.

Overlapping the period **AD 259-68** by analogy with No. 7 above, as the same tribune is recorded. It is argued in the text that this might pre-date Postumus' usurpation, and would thus date c. **AD 258-259**. Found in or before 1851 in Waterhead parish, which includes Birdoswald⁷⁰. Now at Castlesteads.

9. RIB 1883; CIL VII 820.

l(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I Ael(ia)/ Dac(or)um Postumi[ana]/c(ui) p(rae)est) Marc(ius)/ Gallicus/ trib(unus)

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians styled Postumiana (set this up) under the command of Marcius Gallicus, tribune.

AD 259-68. Postumus, Gallic emperor.

Found in 1746, with No. 7, 100 yds east of Birdoswald fort. Now lost.

10. RIB 1885; CIL VII 823.

Primary inscription: *Deo Cocidio*. To the God Cocidius.

Secondary inscription: *l(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I Ael(ia)/ D[a]c(or)um Tetricianoru/m c(ui) p(rae)est) Pomp[on/i]us D[eside]/rat[us.....]/t[rib(unus)]*.

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians styled Tetrician (set this up) under the command of Pomponius Desideratus, tribune.

AD 270-73. Tetricius, Gallic emperor.

Noted by Bainbrigg in 1599 in Thomas Tweddaille's house at Birdoswald⁷¹. Now at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ J. C. Bruce, *Lapidarium Septentrionale*, Newcastle Upon Tyne 1870-1875, 363.

⁷¹ F. Haverfield (n. 2).

11. No designation.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I Aelia/ Dacorum/ Probiana/ c(ui) p(raeest) Aur(elius/ Verinus/ trib(unus).

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians styled Probiana (set this up) under the command of Aurelius Verinus, tribune.

AD 276-82. Probus, emperor.

Found in 1960 during ploughing on the east side of Birdoswald fort, closer to milecastle 49 than to the fort itself⁷². Now at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

Undated**12. RIB 1874; CIL VII 806.**

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ co(hors) I Aelia/ Dacorum/ qu(i)b(us) praeest/ Ammonius/ Victorinus trib(unus).

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians set this up under the command of Ammonius Victorinus, tribune.

Found in or before 1757 and described in a letter. Now at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

13. RIB 1876; CIL VII 809.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ [c]oh(ors) I Ael(ia) Da[c(orum)]/ c(uius) c(uram) agit A/urel(ius) Sa[t]urn[inus.....]

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians (set this up) under the acting command of Aurelius Saturninus.

Seen by Camden at Willowford⁷³. Now lost.

14. RIB 1877; CIL VII 825.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ c[o]h(ors) I/ Aelia Daco[r]/um Aug(usta)/ [cui] p(raeest) Aur(elius) [.....]

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians, styled Augusta, under the command of Aurelius

Found in or before 1867 at Birdoswald⁷⁴. Now at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

15. RIB 1878.

[I(ovi)] O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ [coh(ors) I A]el(ia) Da/[corum] c(ui) p(raeest) F[I(avius)]/

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians, styled Augusta, under the command of Flavius

Found in or before 1893 at Greenhead. Now in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

16. RIB 1879; CIL VII 811.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I Ael(ia)/ Dac(orum) cu[i pr]/aeest)[.]/ Funisul[an]/us Vetto[ni]/anus t[ri]b(unus) v(otum) [s(oluit)] I(ibens) m(erito)].

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians, styled Augusta, under the command of Funisulanus Vettonianus, tribune, willingly and deservedly fulfilled its vow.

⁷² R. P. Wright, 1961, *Roman Britain in 1960. II Inscriptions*, JRS 51, 1961, 194.

⁷³ W. Camden (n. 4), 708.

⁷⁴ J. Horsley (n. 5), 366.

Found when Scaleby Church was restored in 1861 where it had been was re-carved into the effigy of a priest⁷⁵. Still in Scaleby church.

17. RIB 1880.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I Ael(ia) Da/cor(um) c(uius) c(uram) a(git) lul(ius)/ Marcelli/nus c(enturio) leg(ionis) II/ Aug(ustae).

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians (set this up) under the acting command of Julius Marcellinus, centurion of the Second Legion Augusta.

Found in 1886 in the face of the cliff above Underheugh farm. Now at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

18. RIB 1881; CIL VII 812.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ c(o)ho(rs) I A[el(ia)]/ Dac(orum) cui p[rae]/est luliu[s]/ Saturnin[us]/ tribun[us].

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians (set this up) under the command of Julius Saturninus, tribune.

Noted in 1744 built into the clerestorey of Lanercost Priory, where it remains.

19. RIB 1884.

[I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I] Ael(ia)]/ [Daco/rum] c(ui) p(raeest) Do[mit/ius H]onoratus]/ tri[b(unus)].

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians (set this up) under the command of Domitius Honoratus, tribune.

Noted by Haverfield in 1896 built into a farm building at Birdoswald⁷⁶ and relocated there in 1990⁷⁷.

20. RIB 1887; CIL VII 813.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I Ael(ia)/ Dac(orum) c(ui) p(raeest)/ Stat(ius) Lon/ginus trib(unus).

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians (set this up) under the command of Statius Longinus, tribune.

Found by Bainbrig at Willowford in 1599⁷⁸. Now at Rokeby.

21. RIB 1889; CIL VII 814.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I Ael(ia)/ Dac(orum) cui/ [p]raees[t]

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians (set this up) under the command

Found in or before 1600 at Willowford⁷⁹. Now at Rokeby.

22. RIB 1890; CIL VII 815.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I Ael(ia)/ Dacorum/ cui pr(a)eest/ [.....

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians (set this up) under the command

Found before 1732 built into a chimney at Willowford farm⁸⁰. Now lost.

⁷⁵ J. Horsley, op. cit., 367.

⁷⁶ RIB 1981-83.

⁷⁷ P. S. Austen (n. 28).

⁷⁸ F. Haverfield (n. 2).

⁷⁹ W. Camden (n. 4), 708.

⁸⁰ J. Horsley (n. 5), 252.

23. RIB 1891; CIL VII 817.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I Aelia/ Dac[or(um)] c(ui) [p]raeest

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians (set this up) under the command

Found before 1867 at Underheugh farm near Birdoswald⁸¹. Now at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

24. RIB 1894; CIL VII 824.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ co[h(ors)] I A[el(ia)]/ [Dac(orum)]... / ... / M.../NV...A/ ...s/ ...]rin(.)/ b(ene)f(iciar.) V(otum) s(oluit) l(ibens)m(erito).

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians willingly and deservedly fulfilled its vow, with [...]rinus in charge of the work.

Found before 1873 at Birdoswald, moved to Lanercost, and now back on display at Birdoswald.

Other inscriptions**25. RIB 1888; CIL VII 814. Plaque.**

[I(ovi)] O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ [coh(ors) I A]el(ia) Dac(orum) [cui pr]aeest [....]us Con/[.... t]rib(unus).

To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians (set this up) under the command ofus Con....., tribune.

Found in 1833 at Birdoswald⁸². Now at Castlesteads.

26. RIB 1872; CIL VII 803. Altar.

Deo Cocidio/ coh(ors) I Aelia/ [Dacorum cui praest Tere]ntius Valerianus [trib(unus) v(otum) s(oluit) l(ibens) m(erito)].

To the god Cocidius the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians, under the comand of Terentius Valerianus, tribune, willingly and deservedly fulfilled its vow.

Found in or before 1694 and described in a letter. Now at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

27. RIB 1898; CIL VII 826. Altar.

Deo Ma/rti c(o)h(ortis) pri(mae) [A]e/l(iae) Dac(orum) V/ P V / CVI tri{b(unus)}].

To the god Mars of the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians,tribune

Altar found between 1607 and 1623 at Birdoswald. Seen at Naworth by Horsley⁸³, moved to Rokeby and now lost.

28. RIB 1904; CIL VII 829. Statue base.

Signis/ et N(umini) Au[g(usti) coh(ors) I] Ael(ia) [.....]

To the Standards and to the Deity of the Emperor the first Aelian Cohort

Found in or before 1727 at Birdoswald⁸⁴. Now at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

⁸¹ J. Horsley (n. 5), 364.

⁸² J. Horsley, op. cit., 362.

⁸³ J. Horsley (n. 5).

⁸⁴ J. Horsley, op. cit., 80, Pl Xlvii.

29. RIB 1906; CIL VII 807. Base.

[....]/ to [....]/ *coh(ors) I [....]/ qu[i]b(us) pra[e]est Amm(onius)/ Victorin(us)/ trib(unus)*.

... the First Cohort ... under the command of Ammonius Victorinus, the tribune.
For the same tribune in command of *cohors I Aelia Dacorum* see No. 12.

Found between 1607 and 1623 at Birdoswald. Seen at Naworth by Horsley⁸⁵, moved to Rokeby where it still is.

30. RIB 1918. Building stone.

c(enturia) Deci Sax(ae) coh(ortis) I Dac(orum).

The century of Decius Saxa of the first cohort of Dacians (built this).

Found in or before 1899 built into the north wall of Birdoswald farmhouse, where it can still be seen⁸⁶.

31. RIB 1919: CIL VII 865. Tombstone.

D(is) M(anibus)/ Aureli/ Concor(di) vixit/ ann(um) un/um d(ies) V/ fil(ius) Aurel(i)/ Iuliani/ tribuni.

To the spirits of the departed and of Aurelius Concordius: he lived one year and five days, son of Aurelius Julianus the tribune.

Found in 1783, built into a farm building at Birdoswald⁸⁷. Later moved to Lancaster, and now in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

32. RIB 1920: CIL VII 866. Tombstone.

D(is) [M(anibus)]/ Deciba[l.... vix(it)]/ dieb[us.....] et Blae[s . vix]/ s[i]t a(nnis) X Et[...us] frat[er]

To the spirits of the departed (and of) Decibalus (who) lived (...) days and Blaesus (who) lived ten years, their brother (set this up).

Found in 1752 a little to the west of the fort of Birdoswald. First published and drawn by Swinhoe and since broken. Now in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

33. RIB 1921: CIL VII 867. Tombstone.

....]spa Septimo vi[xi]t ann(os)/ XXXX mil(itavit) XVIII coh(orte) I Ae(lia) Dacorum/ h(eres) f(aciendum) c(uravit).

To ... Septimus (who) lived forty years (and) served 18 (years) in the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians; his heir had this set up.

Found around 1802 at Birdoswald⁸⁸. Now lost.

Inscriptions from sites other than Birdoswald**34. RIB 1365. Building stone.**

coh(ortis) I/ Dac(orum)/ c(enturia) Ael(i) Dida(e).

From the first cohort of Dacians, the century of Aelius Dida (built this).

Found at Benwell between turret 7b and milecastle 8 on the north edge of the south mound of the Vallum in 1936. Now in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

⁸⁵ Op. cit.

⁸⁶ RIB 1981-83.

⁸⁷ D. and S. Lysons, *Magna Britannia*, Vol. IV, Cumberland 1816, 183, No. 132.

⁸⁸ D. and S. Lysons, op. cit., 181, No. 97.

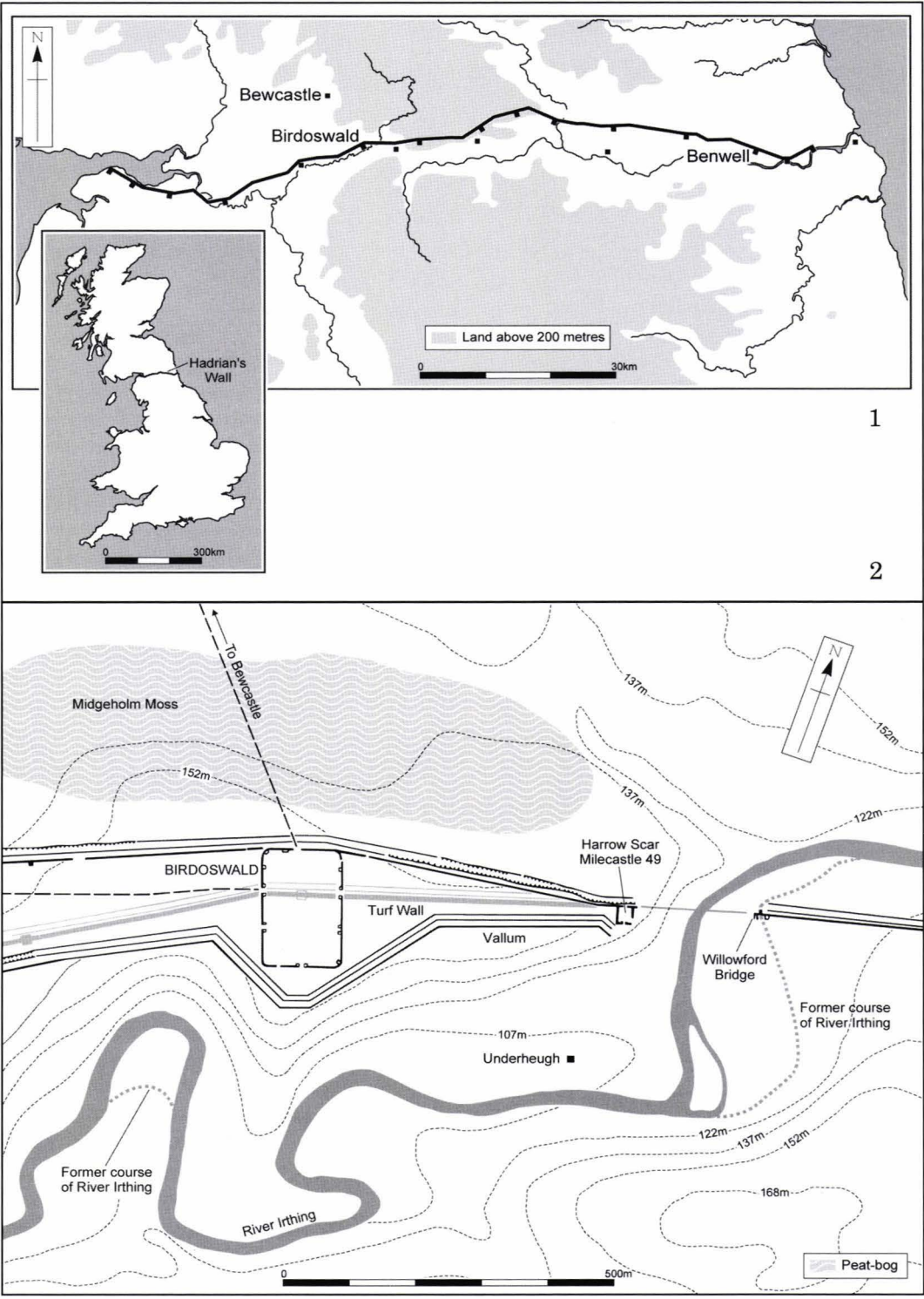
35. RIB 991; CIL VII 975. Altar.

*[I(ovi)] O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ coh(ors) I Dac(orum) [.../.../.]at[.]e[..]t(..)
centur(io)/ leg(ionis) II [Aug(ustae)/ v(otum) s(oluit) l(ibens) m(erito)].*

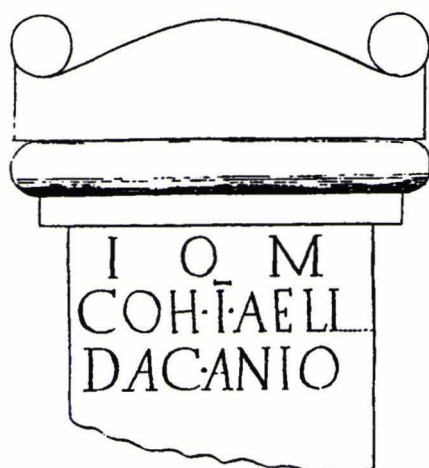
To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the first cohort of Dacians, centurion of the Second Legion Augusta, willingly and deservedly fulfilled its vow.

Seen in or before 1794 re-used as the cover slab of a drain at Demesne Farm, Bewcastle. Published and drawn by Hutchinson⁸⁹, Now lost.

⁸⁹ W. Hutchinson, *The History Of The County Of Cumberland*, Vol I, 93



Pl. 1. 1. Location of places on Hadrian's Wall where inscriptions of *Coh I Aelia Dacorum* have been found. 2. The area of Birdoswald (Banna) fort showing the places where inscriptions have been found which are mentioned in the text



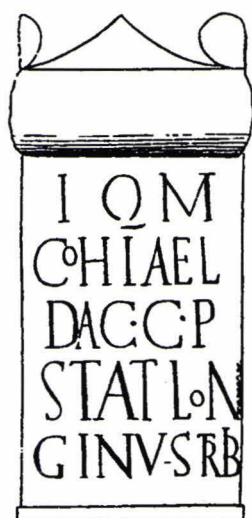
Jovi Optimo Maximo cohortis
primae Aeliae Dacorum Anio



Jovi Optimo Maximo co-
horts prima Aelia Dacorum
cui praeest Ig.....



Jovi Optimo Maximo co-
horts prima Aelia Daco-
rum cui praeest Aurelius
Ebius tribunus Perpetuo
confule



Jovi Optimo Maximo
cohors prima Aelia Da-
corum cui praeest Stati-
us Longinus tribunus



Jovi Optimo Maximo
cohors prima Aelia
Dacorum cui praeest



Jovi Optimo Maximo
cohors prima Aelia
Dacorum cui prae-
est Maximus tribunus



1



2



3

Pl. 3. 1. Inscription of *Coh I Aelia Dacorum* from the *porta principalis dextra* at Birdoswald, showing flanking *falx* and palm frond (Cat. No 2) (Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle upon Tyne). 2. Inscription of *Coh I Aelia Dacorum* recording the construction of an *horreum* at Birdoswald, showing flanking *falx* and palm frond (Cat. No 1) (Cumbria County Council). 3. Surviving fragment of the tombstone of Decibalus and Blaesus (Cat. No 32) (Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle upon Tyne)