

III. INSCRIPTIONS¹

By R.S.O. TOMLIN

A. MONUMENTAL

1. Near **Woodstock** (SP 45 16), Oxfordshire (FIG. 1). Three conjoining pieces of a rectangular copper-alloy dedication plaque, overall 188 by 219 mm, ranging from 3.2 to 3.8 mm in thickness, total weight 638 g, found² in 2022. They comprise three-quarters of the original, its lower-left quarter now missing. The lettering is skilfully drawn and incised, with exaggerated bottom-serifs and successive lines carefully diminishing in height.³ They read: DEAE Δ MINER | VAE Δ RVDVPIAE | ET Δ NVM Δ AVG | IVL Δ IVLIANVS Δ IVLI | [...] ET Δ BRIC | [...] ♀ FILIA Δ | [...] Δ EX Δ VOTO Δ | [...] Δ M, *deae Miner/uae Rudupiae / et num(ini) Aug(usti) | Iul(ius) Iulianus Iuli | [filius] et Bric | [...] filia | [...] ex uoto | [l(ibentes)] m(erito)*. ‘To the goddess Minerva Rudupia and the Divinity of the Emperor, Iulius Iulianus son of Iulius [...] and Bric[...] daughter [?of ...] in accordance with their vow [willingly], deservedly.’⁴

¹ Inscriptions on STONE (‘Monumental’) have been arranged as in the order followed by R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright in *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain* Vol. i (Oxford, 1965) and (slightly modified) by R.S.O. Tomlin, R.P. Wright and M.W.C. Hassall, in *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain* Vol. iii (Oxford, 2009), which are henceforth cited respectively as *RIB* (1–2400) and *RIB* III (3001–3550). Citation is by item and not page number. Inscriptions on PERSONAL BELONGINGS and the like (*instrumentum domesticum*) have been arranged alphabetically by site under their counties. For each site they have been ordered as in *RIB*, pp. xiii–xiv. The items of *instrumentum domesticum* published in the eight fascicules of *RIB* II (Gloucester and Stroud, 1990–95), edited by S.S. Frere and R.S.O. Tomlin, are cited by fascicule, by the number of their category (*RIB* 2401–2505) and by their sub-number within it (e.g. *RIB* II.2, 2415.53). Non-literate graffiti and graffiti with fewer than three complete letters have generally been excluded. When measurements are quoted, the width precedes the height. Special thanks are due to Scott Vanderbilt, editor of the *Roman Inscriptions of Britain* website, for noting new items and corrections.

² By a metal-detectorist on a site with evidence of Roman occupation, probably a villa, part of a hoard of 161 copper-alloy fragments, presumably scrap metal. The plaque’s original location is thus unknown, but would have been a temple. It is now in the Oxfordshire Museums store at Standlake, where Edward Caswell, county Finds Liaison Officer, made it available. It was first studied by John Pearce from photographs, and autopsy confirms the accuracy of his observation. This entry uses his interim report.

³ Much of the surface is encrusted with corrosion-products, but except in lines 4 and 5 (see next note) the surviving letters are complete and legible. The line-endings observe a vertical setting-out line 20 mm inside the right-hand edge, which must have corresponded to a line on the left, but this is now obscured. The lettering seems to have been centred between them. Average letter-heights by line, varying slightly: (1) 22 mm; (2) 16 mm; (3) 14.5 mm; (4) 11.5 mm; (5) 11 mm; (6) 11 mm; (7) 12 mm; (8) 11 mm. Except for an elaborate leaf-stop in line 6, word separation is by three-pointed interpuncts, an arc joined midway by a shorter arc. At the foot of the plaque is incised a fillet or wreath, now incomplete, between two palm branches, the left one now lost. In the broken edge at the very bottom is a round hole, no doubt to secure the plaque to something, but there are no corresponding holes elsewhere.

⁴ Line-by-line notes. (1) INE is ligatured. (2) RVDVPIAE is certain, separated from *Mineruae* by interpunct. By analogy with the goddess Sulis at Bath, who is often *Sulis Minerva*, *Rudupia* (nominative) is surely a local goddess ‘identified’ with Roman Minerva. But she is otherwise unattested, and the etymology of her name must be left to the Celticists; any connection with the place-name *Rutupia* (Richborough) seems unlikely. (4) Only the tips remain of three or four letters before IVLIANVS, but they include the second diagonal of V, and are quite consistent with IVL. (5) This line, like those below, has lost its left-hand half. Since it is preceded by IVLI (genitive) and the second dedicator is described as [...] FILIA, someone’s ‘daughter’, [FILIVS] for ‘son of Iulius’ (*Iuli*) is an easy restoration. There are two instances of the name *Iulius Iulianus* from Britain, a legate of Legion II Augusta (*RIB* 1138) and a soldier of that legion (*RIB* 360), but neither should be identified here. The line ends with BRIC (its R obscured by corrosion products, but still recognisable), which must be the beginning of the name of a second dedicator. *Brico-* is a Celtic

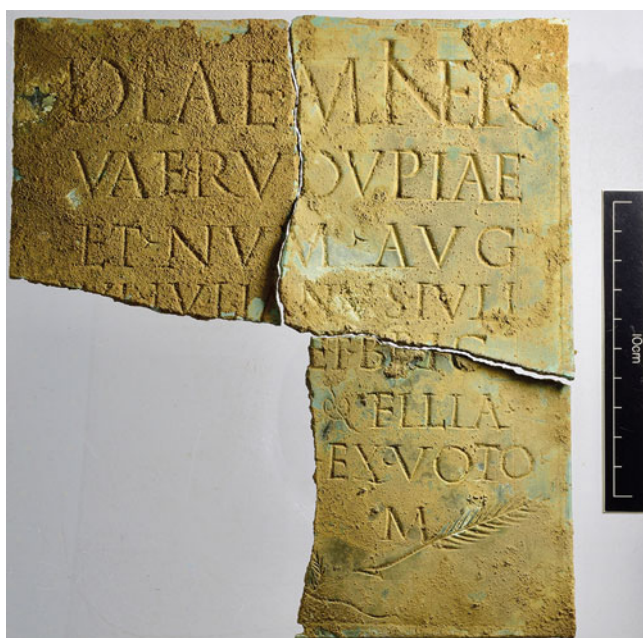


FIG. 1. Near Woodstock, copper-alloy plaque (No. 1) (photo: Edward Caswell; drawing: R.S.O. Tomlin).

2. **Papcastle** (*Deruentio* NY 112 314), Cumbria (FIG. 2). Larger part of a buff sandstone altar, 0.44 m wide (at the top) by 0.95 m high, 0.34 m deep, found⁵ amongst rubble at the Roman bridge abutment south of the Roman fort. Most of the capital and base are lost, but the recessed die is almost complete. It is broken at the bottom and to the right, but enough of the surface here remains to show that there were only seven lines of inscribed letters.⁶ These are quite well formed, often with an exaggerated horizontal serif at top and bottom, and they read: I O M | COH I VAN | CVI PRAEST | NIVENTIAN | [.J]RAEF CVRA | AGENT SEX FRON|TON E > LEG-XX-V[.], *I(oui) O(ptimo) M(aximo) | coh(ors) I Van(gionum) | cui prae<e>st | <lu>uentian(us) | [p]raef(ectus) cura<m> | agent<e> Sex(..) Fron/ton(e) leg(ionis) XX V(aleriae) [V(ictricis)]*. ‘To Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Cohort of Vangiones commanded by the prefect Iuventianus, under the charge of Sex(..) Fronto, centurion of the Twentieth Legion *Valeria Victrix*.’⁷

name-element, but uncommon; compare *Bricomarus* below (item No. 9, with note), and note *Brica* (*RIB* 686 and 744). But if regarded as a variant of *Brigo*—it does suggest more possibilities, for example *Brigomalla* (*Tab. Sulis* 30.1, with note). (6) This line must have completed the name of Bric[...], but the surviving FILIA which follows raises a problem. It should have been preceded by her father’s name, but there cannot have been room for this as well. Instead, it is easier to suppose that no father’s name was stated, since it could be taken for granted that *filia* identified her as the ‘daughter’ of Iulius Iulianus, her fellow-dedicator. This seems to be the best solution, even though a man and woman making a dedication are inherently more likely to be husband and wife than father and daughter. (7) EX VOTO would have been preceded by the object dedicated, such as a ‘statue’ (*signum*), or by a verb of dedication; but *soluerunt* (compare *RIB* 744, *libentes ex uoto soluerunt*) or *posuerunt* would be too long for the likely space. However, *posuere* would fit nicely, even if this form is usually found in metrical epitaphs. If so, the plaque would have been attached to the dedication they ‘placed’. (8) The placing of M mid-way in its half of the line shows that it was balanced in the missing left-hand half by L, for the formulaic *libentes m(erito)*.

⁵ During excavation by Ecus Archaeology, from where Stuart Ross sent photographs and other details. It will be published with commentary in the final report.

⁶ Letter-heights by line: (1) 60.5 mm; (2) 51.8 mm; (3) 51.5 mm; (4) 48 mm; (5) 42.5 mm; (6) 41.5 mm; (7) 42.9 mm. There is no spacing between words, but abbreviations and word-endings are indicated by leaf-stops or medial points.

⁷ The same cohort dedicated another altar at Papcastle to Mars (*Britannia* 46 (2015), 388, No. 6), describing itself as milliary and part-mounted but commanded by a prefect. It was probably drafted to Britain in A.D. 61 (*Tab. Lond. Bloomberg* 48, with note) and is explicitly *milliaria* in the Malpas diploma of A.D. 103 (*RIB* II.1, 2401.1), but at Benwell, where it preceded *ala I Asturum* as the Hadrianic garrison, it was still commanded by a prefect (*RIB* 1328). Its other inscriptions are later, and except for *RIB* 1482 they all come from Risingham. Two are explicitly Severan: *RIB* 1234 (A.D. 205–7), in which the cohort is still *m(illiaria) eq(uitata)* but commanded by a tribune; and *RIB* 1235 (A.D. 213). The others are *RIB* 1231 (explicitly *[e]q(uitata) mil(liaria)*), 1215, 1216 and 1217, four altars dedicated by the cohort and various tribunes; a fifth altar (*RIB* 1230) names it, but has lost almost all its lettering; and there is *RIB* 1241, a slab which records its building-work commanded by another tribune. That the cohort was commanded by tribunes is confirmed by *RIB* 1482 from Chesters, the tombstone of Fabia Honorata, the daughter of Fabius Honoratus *tribun(us) coh(ortis) I Vangion(um)* by his wife Aurelia Eglectiana, who is probably ‘the wife of Fabius the soldier’ named by an altar at Risingham (*RIB* 1228, *miles ... Fabio nupta*).

It is likely that the Vangiones garrisoned Papcastle before Hadrian’s Wall was built, and were established there by Cerialis in his advance to Carlisle. The question of why this double-strength cohort was commanded by a prefect, not a tribune, at Papcastle and Benwell, but later by a tribune at Risingham, is discussed in *Britannia* 46 (2015), 388–90, n. 15. Compare the milliary *cohors I Tungrorum*, which is likewise commanded by prefects at Vindolanda and Housesteads, for which Eric Birley found ‘an explanation ready to hand’ (*The Roman Army: Papers 1929–1986* (1988), 356): it was divided between two stations at the time. The Vindolanda strength report (*Tab. Vindol.* II, 154) now supports this idea, since it gives the cohort 752 men, too many for a ‘quingenary’ cohort, but names its commander as the prefect Iulius Verecundus. Is this because 337 men had been posted to Coria, leaving a quingenary ‘rump cohort’ (in Birley’s phrase) at Vindolanda appropriate to a prefect? But Birley, in *Vindolanda Research Reports* II (1993), 8, pointed to *RIB* 1981 (Castlesteads) in which the milliary *cohors II Tungrorum* is also commanded by a prefect; and since he is described as *praef(ectus) Tungrorum*, Birley now accepted Strobel’s suggestion that Tungrian and Batavian nobles retained the title of ‘prefect’ (from *praefectus civitatis*) when they commanded a milliary cohort of their fellow-tribesmen. In this he was followed by Anthony Birley in *ZPE* 186 (2013), 294, even though it would imply that the Vangiones at Benwell were still being commanded by their own nobility, more than half a century after the unit came to Britain. It is easier to suppose that they were divided between Benwell and Papcastle, and later reunited took part in the advance into Scotland; at Benwell they were then succeeded by the *ala I Asturum*, becoming the garrison of Risingham.

The Papcastle prefect’s origin is unknown, his name being written as NIVENTIAN, abbreviated by omission of the nominative termination –VS. A cognomen **Niventianus* is not attested, nor is the nomen **Niventius* from which it would

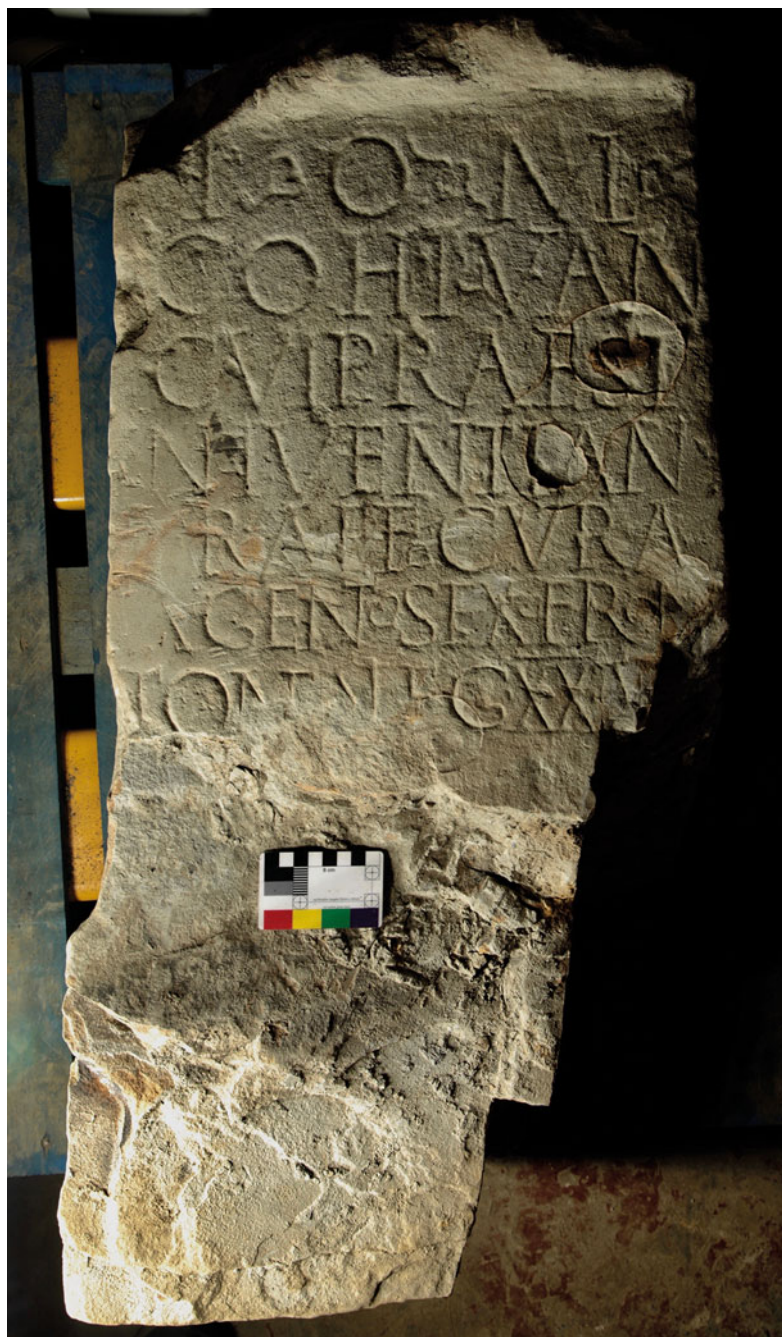


FIG. 2. Papcastle, inscribed altar (No. 2) (photo: Ecus Archaeology).

3. Near **Vindolanda** (NY 769 663), Northumberland (FIG. 3). Buff grey sandstone building stone, 481 by 123 mm, 320 mm deep, found⁸ in c. 2018. The face is neatly inscribed: > VETTI QVIETI, (*centuria*) *Vetti Quieti*. ‘The century of Vettius Quietus (built this).’⁹

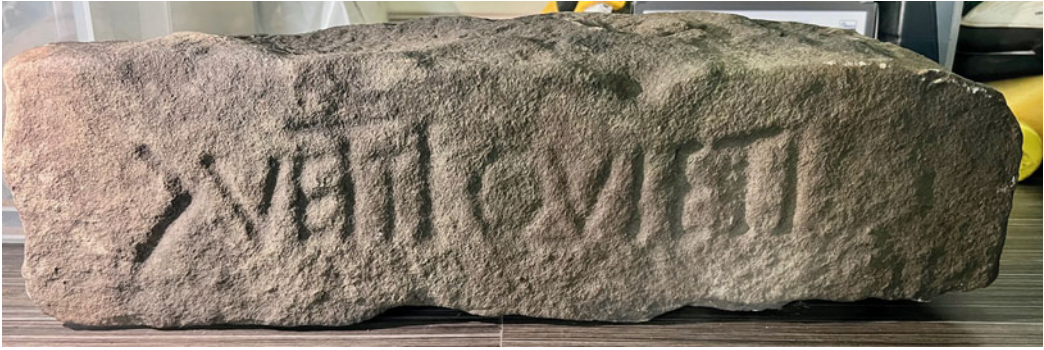


FIG. 3. Near Vindolanda, inscribed building stone (No. 3) (photo: Vindolanda Trust).

4. **Westerwood** (NS 760 773) Roman fort, North Lanarkshire (FIG. 4). Rectangular building stone ‘2 ft long and 6 inches broad’ (0.61 by 0.15 m) but broken to the right, found¹⁰ in 1723 but now lost. The face is inscribed: RIV·S IMP[...]¹¹

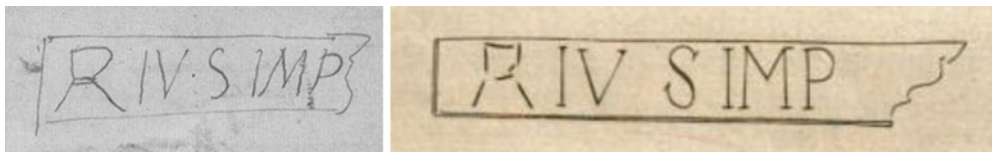


FIG. 4. Westerwood, inscribed building stone (No. 4) ((a) Clerk drawing, by courtesy of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik; (b) Gordon drawing from *Itinerarium Septentrionale*).

have derived. Since the cohort had a centurion as acting-commander (*cura*<*m*>|*agent*<*e*>), the prefect’s name would have been unfamiliar, and it is likely that NI is the stone-cutter’s mistake for IV: the cognomen *Iuventianus* is quite common. The centurion’s first name is abbreviated to SEX, which is not the praenomen *Sex(tus)* since it is directly followed by a cognomen, but a nomen derived from it, either *Sextius* or *Sextilius*, both quite common. Neither officer is otherwise attested.

⁸ By Harry Hall of Thorngrifton, who bought it from a local builder, recognising it was Roman. He showed a photograph to Segedunum Museum, which Alex Croom duly forwarded, but he died before he could provide further details. Presumably it came from Hadrian’s Wall since Thorngrifton is just south of Milecastle 37 and Housesteads, but was then re-used in a farm building or field wall. It now belongs to Sue Wilson (Lady Gibson) who has deposited it temporarily at Vindolanda, from where Andrew Birley sent a photograph and other details.

⁹ Most of the letters are c. 52 mm high. TT in *Vetti* is formed by raising the height of the first T and extending its cross-stroke over the adjoining E and T. This is balanced by also raising the height of final I. The centurion is otherwise unattested.

¹⁰ When it was seen by Alexander Gordon in a barn at Westerwood during his journey along the Antonine Wall later published as *Itinerarium Septentrionale* (1726). He noted Roman stones for his patron, Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, drawings of which with Clerk’s annotation survive: they are published with full commentary by Lawrence Keppie, in ‘Searching out Roman Inscribed and Sculptured Stones on the Antonine Wall in 1723’, *Britannia* 45 (2014), 11–29. This stone is No. 8 at p. 19. Unlike the other inscribed stones (except for three, which perhaps were uninscribed or not Roman), it was not included in *RIB* I. This is probably because the drawing of it in *Itinerarium Septentrionale*, pl. 12, has no caption or explanatory text, which prompted Huebner to ‘guess’ (*coniectura*) it was a samian potter’s stamp or signature. So he published it as *CIL* vii 1336.1281, without provenance (*loco incerto*).

¹¹ It is not known who made the drawing annotated by Clerk (see previous note), but it was probably copied from one made by Gordon, since it is closely related to the drawing in *Itinerarium Septentrionale* (pl. 12) just mentioned. This, however, is schematic with its un-Roman ‘M’ and the uninscribed surface shown to the right of IMP. By contrast, the

B. INSTRUMENTUM DOMESTICUM

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

5. **Medmenham** (SU 80 84) (FIG. 5). Square bezel of a silver finger-ring, 10.2 by 10.5 mm, 0.8 mm thick, weight 0.54 g, found¹² in 2023. Incised retrograde: EXIMO | RINVS | VIVAS, probably <Me>*mo/rinus* / *uiuas*. ‘Long life to you, Memorinus.’¹³



FIG. 5. Medmenham, silver ring bezel (No. 5) (photo: PAS).

CO. DURHAM

6. **Hadrian's Wall**, unknown provenance (FIG. 6).¹⁴ Base sherd of a samian vessel stamped SABELLVS (Trajan–Hadrian), 42 by 33 mm, in capitals scratched underneath after firing: RVFI, *Rufi*. ‘(Property) of Rufus.’¹⁵

Clerk drawing draws M correctly and locates the broken edge against P. The Clerk drawing also puts a medial point between IV and S, where *Itinerarium*, pl. 12, indicates quite a wide space. Both drawings (see FIG. 4 (a) and (b) above) indicate a lesser space between R and I, and between S and I. Thus the exact form of the text is uncertain. RIVS IMP, as read by Huebner and Keppie, is the likely reading, with the implication that RIVS is a name-ending, [*...jrius* followed by *imp[...]*]. But the spacing raises the possibility that IV S is the numeral ‘4½’, and even that MP is *m(ille) p(assuum)*, ‘mile(s)’; which would suggest a measurement of distance, like other stones from the Antonine Wall.

¹² By a metal-detectorist, PAS ref. OXON-A9C17E, and currently held by the British Museum. Edward Caswell, Finds Liaison Officer for Oxfordshire, sent a photograph and other details.

¹³ The first three letters are certainly EXI, but a name **Eximorinus* is not attested whereas *Memor* and its derivatives such as *Memorinus* are quite common. This would suggest the engraver bungled ME by mis-reading the diagonals of M and reversing it with E. For other ring-bezels inscribed retrograde with *uiuas* and a personal name, see *RIB* II.3, 2422.25; *Britannia* 38 (2007), 353, No. 11; 45 (2014), 446, No. 28 (with *in deo* and thus Christian). *Britannia* 29 (1998), 436, No. 10 (also Christian) is not said to be retrograde. Similar inscriptions but rectograde are found on ring-facets: *RIB* II.3, 2422.14 and 70, both Christian (*in deo*). And for bezels without a personal name, see *RIB* II.3, 2422.15 (*uiuas in deo*) and 42 (*uiuas*).

¹⁴ Museum of Archaeology, Durham, DURMA.U24. Details of this and Alienum (b) below come from the Museum website and the Curator, Gemma Lewis. Its provenance has not yet been established, but is thought to be one of Eric Birley's excavations.

¹⁵ The sherd is more or less rectangular, as if trimmed into a ‘counter’, but if so, the graffito is unrelated. Since it observes the turning-marks left by the potter's wheel, it was evidently written towards the top of the circumference of the foot-ring, like most ownership graffiti. The owner's cognomen *Rufus* is very common.



FIG. 6. Hadrian's Wall, unknown provenance, samian graffito (No. 6) (photo: Museum of Archaeology, Durham; drawn from it by R.S.O. Tomlin).

ESSEX

7. **Colchester** (*Camulodunum*, TL 993 253) North Hill, Sixth Form College formerly Gilbert School (FIG. 7). Wine amphora (Dressel 2–4) found¹⁶ in 1984–5. On the neck, ink-written in cursive letters: *modios tres*, '(holds) three *modii*'.¹⁷



FIG. 7. Colchester, amphora dipinto (No. 7) (photo: Colchester Museum; drawn from it by R.S.O. Tomlin).

¹⁶ During excavation by Colchester Archaeological Trust, with a drawing of the dipinto in R.P. Symonds and S. Wade, *Roman Pottery from Excavations in Colchester 1971–86* (1999), fig. 3.3, No. 55. Now in Colchester Museum (COLEM.1988.44.A2391), from where Glynn Davis sent a photograph and other details.

¹⁷ The loop of the first *o* was not completed, and the downward stroke of *d* was continued into ligatured *i*. Three *modii* are equivalent to 26.25 litres. The average capacity of Dressel 2–4 is 25.20 litres, according to D.P.S. Peacock and D.F. Williams, *Amphorae and the Roman Economy* (1991), 52.

8. **Gestingthorpe** Roman villa (TL 827 387). Wall sherd of a Central-Gaulish samian cup (Dr. 33, Antonine), found¹⁸ before 1975. Incised on the lower angle after firing: [...]*VICT*[...], *Vict[or]* or *Vict[oris]*. ‘Victor’ or ‘(property) of Victor’.¹⁹

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

9. **Sandhurst** (SO 83 23), three miles north of Gloucester (*Gleuum*) (FIG. 8). Lead sealing, 14 by 10 mm, 4 mm deep, found²⁰ in 2022. One face is impressed by a trapezoid die: *BRICO*|*MARI*, *Brico/mari*. ‘(Sealing) of Bricomarus’.²¹



FIG. 8. Sandhurst, lead sealing (No. 9) (photo: PAS).

10. **Selsley West**, Stroud (SO 824 033). Fragment of a flat tile found²² in 2023 in a garden at Broad Street. Stamped: [*ARVER*]*I*²³

11. Ibid. Fragment of a flat tile, stamped: [*TPL*]*F*²⁴

HERTFORDSHIRE

12. **Ashwell** near Baldock (TL 24 33) (FIG. 9). Silver spoon, weight 8.9 g, now 103.5 mm in length, its handle 70 mm long, found²⁵ in 2004. The oval bowl is now incomplete and much abraded; within it, crudely incised: *MOD*..*SIIN*[...], probably *Mod[e]s[t]in[us]*. ‘Modestinus’.²⁶

¹⁸ During the excavations published as Jo Draper, *Excavations by Mr H.P. Cooper on the Roman Site at Hill Farm, Gestingthorpe, Essex* (1985), in which this graffito is item No. 473 on p. 83 with fig. 41.473 (by Warwick Rodwell).

¹⁹ Unless it is a name derived from *Victor* such as *Victorinus*.

²⁰ PAS ref. GLO-9B010A, drafted by Kurt Adams, Finds Liaison Officer for Gloucestershire, who sent photographs and other details.

²¹ Assuming that M includes Λ ligatured, but there is no explicit indication such as a tiny cross-stroke. The name is Celtic and rare (with only one instance in Dalmatia, *CIL* iii 13975), but both elements are found in other names. No other impression of the seal is known.

²² With the next item, and reported to Cotswold Archaeology where Neil Holbrook informed Peter Warry, who identified both stamps and sent a photograph.

²³ *RIB* II.5, 2489.4A.

²⁴ *RIB* II.5, 2489.49.

²⁵ By a metal-detectorist on the site of the temple of Senuna, and noted by Ralph Jackson and Gilbert Burleigh, *Dea Senuna: Treasure, Cult and Ritual at Ashwell, Hertfordshire* (2018), 200. It is now in the British Museum, acc. no. 2006, 1003.1, where it was made available by Richard Hobbs.

²⁶ The graffito is read when the spoon is held in the left hand, showing that it was incised by the owner himself, not by a professional engraver (using a vice) for it to be read when used. The two strokes after *MOD* look more like Λ or R, but must be a clumsy II for E. The two vertical strokes after S must be meant for TI, not E, but there is no sign of the cross-stroke of T. The next letter is probably N, but might be an incomplete IA (for *Modestianus*).

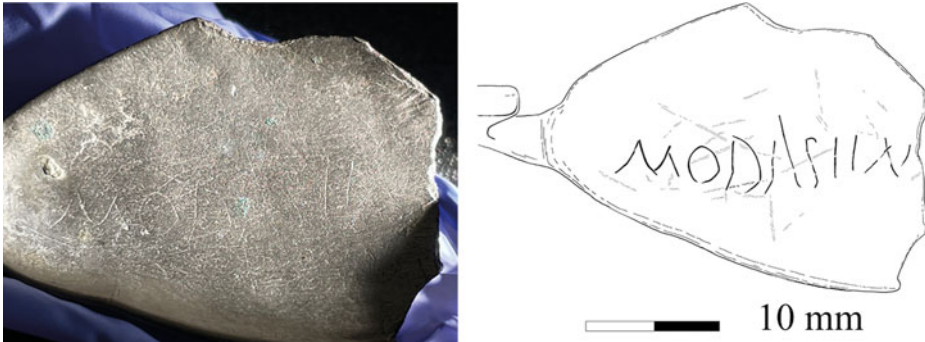


FIG. 9. Ashwell, bowl of a silver spoon with graffito (No. 12) (photo and drawing: R.S.O. Tomlin).

13. **Hemel Hempstead**, Spencer's Park (TL 056 071) (FIG. 10). Central-Gaulish samian cup (Dr. 33) with an illegible stamp, Hadrianic or Antonine, found in 2014.²⁷ It is almost complete but broken into pieces, with graffiti in three places, all made after firing. (a) Across the underside of the foot-ring, two shallow notches 4 mm apart.²⁸ (b) Underneath, within the foot-ring, a medley of diagonal incisions which can be resolved into three successive graffiti by seeing which stroke cuts another: (i) V T; (ii) A; (iii) A again.²⁹ (c) On the outer wall, neatly incised with the cup inverted: A. The cup thus seems to have had two owners, the second of whom, with another hand to help him, incised the initial letter of his name A(. . .) three times.

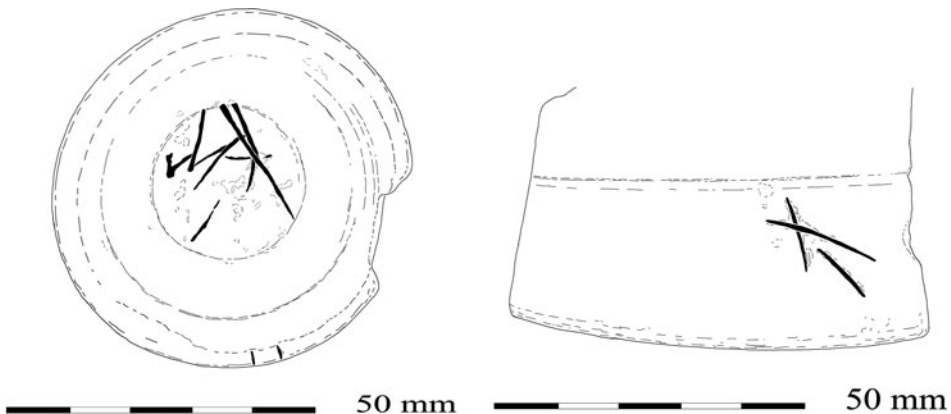


FIG. 10. Hemel Hempstead, graffiti on a samian cup (No. 13) (drawing: R.S.O. Tomlin).

²⁷ With the next item during excavation by Border Archaeology, from where Jo Mills made them available (respectively <SF 153> and <SF 189>).

²⁸ A mark of identification, perhaps the numeral '2'.

²⁹ First incised were the letters V and T, rather widely separated. Then two converging diagonals which cut the tip of V and the cross-bar of T. They do not meet because of the rim, but they are linked by a slighter diagonal from the foot of the first to the second midway. They can be seen as an incomplete A. Finally a long diagonal stroke, also cutting the cross-bar of T, which meets another to its left, at about the three-quarter point. Between them and below is a slighter, detached diagonal stroke. These form a second A, better made and embracing the whole of the circle underneath. V T might be the very common name *Vitalis* abbreviated, but there is no sign of I in the space between V and T. They were overwritten by A, twice.

14. Ibid. (FIG. 11). Three conjoining rim sherds of a Central-Gaulish samian bowl (Dr. 31) incised after firing with three letters just below the rim: PΑΣ, probably *Pas(tor)*. ‘Pastor’.³⁰

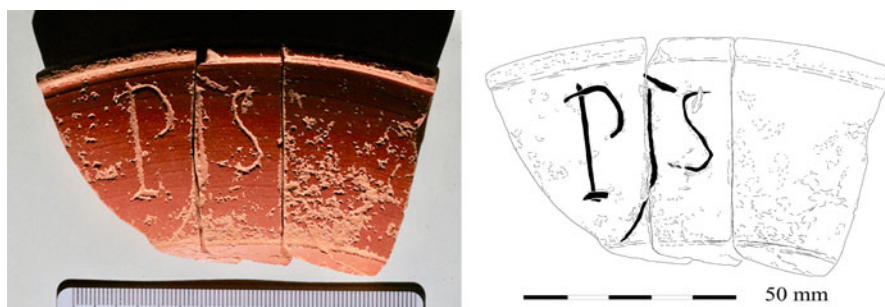


FIG. 11. Hemel Hempstead, graffito on a samian bowl (No. 14) (photo and drawing: R.S.O. Tomlin).

15. **St Albans** (*Verulamium*, TL 13 07). Copper-alloy finger-ring found³¹ in 1986–88. Neatly incised on either side of the rectangular bezel: SERVVS | AMORIS, *servus amoris*. ‘The slave of love’.³²

LINCOLNSHIRE

16. **Lincoln** (*Lindum*) eastern bypass (FIG. 12). Rim sherd of a decorated samian bowl (Dr. 37) found³³ in 2016/18, scratched faintly after firing on the wall: [...]AR, probably [*M*]ar(...). The owner’s name abbreviated, most likely *Mar(tialis)*.³⁴

³⁰ The graffito is complete, but its letters differ in form. The first is capital P with a neat serif across the foot. The third is also a capital, S, but much smaller. Between them, and rather cramped for space, is a long vertical stroke which trails off left in a downward diagonal, and is topped by a separate short diagonal stroke. This might be read as cursive R, but is more likely to be a cursive or ‘open’ A, since the short, straight diagonal would have continued an upward diagonal from the left for R. Also the sequence PAS is more easily understood than PRS: PRS might be seen as the initials *P(ublius) R(...) S(...)*, but PAS would be the abbreviated name *Pas(tor)*, well attested in Britain at Vindolanda (*Tab. Vindol.* II, 259 and III, 619), Carvoran (*RIB* 1795) and Carlisle (*Tab. Luguval.* 16.25).

³¹ During the excavations published as Rosalind Niblett, William Manning and Christopher Saunders, ‘Verulamium: Excavations within the Roman Town 1986–88’, *Britannia* 37 (2006), 53–188, in which it is p. 140, No. 9, and illustrated in figs. 39 and 40.

³² The idea of the lover as ‘slave’ is so familiar (F.O. Copley, ‘*Servitium amoris* in the Roman Elegists’, *TAPA* 78 (1947), 285–300) that the phrase *servus amoris* must have been a cliché, yet this finger-ring is its first instance as an inscription; indeed, in Classical literature it occurs only in Propertius’ imagined epitaph (*Elegies* ii.13.35–6): *unius servus amoris*, ‘the slave of a single love’ [for Cynthia].

³³ During excavation by Network Archaeology, (16288) SF 906, who made it available. It will be published in their final report with eight other graffiti, all rather slight; marks of identification and the fragment of an amphora potter’s ‘signature’, probably *La[...]*.

³⁴ R is perfunctory, little more than a vertical stroke joined by two diagonal strokes which intersect, but there is also a curve to the right. A is ‘open’, without a cross-bar. There are other possibilities, such as [*C*]ar(...) for [*C*]ar(us) (etc.) and [*V*]ar(...) for [*V*]ar(us) (etc.), but for other instances of MAR on samian, see *RIB* II.7, 2501.322, 323 and 324.

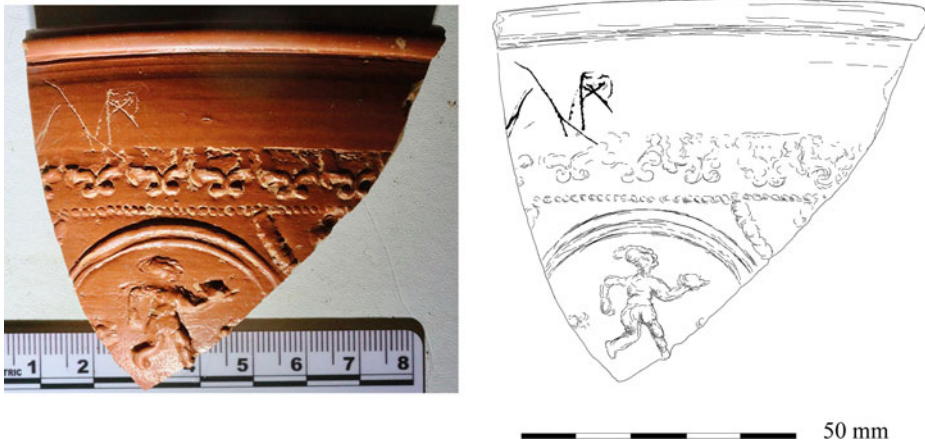


FIG. 12. Lincoln eastern bypass, graffito on a samian bowl (No. 16) (photo and drawing: R.S.O. Tomlin).

LONDON

17. **London** Southwark, 179–81 Borough High Street (FIG. 13). Bone roundel, 19 mm in diameter, 4 mm thick.³⁵ Crudely incised: CARA|TIVS, *Caratius*.³⁶



FIG. 13. Southwark, bone roundel with graffito (No. 17) (drawing: R.S.O. Tomlin from a photo by MoLA).

³⁵ C. Cowan, F. Seeley, A. Wardle, A. Westman and L. Wheeler, *Roman Southwark Settlement and Economy: Excavations in Southwark 1973–91* (2009), 134, fig. 101 <S67>. At p. 131 said to be ‘inscribed CARA FILIS’, but without explanation. Now in the Museum of London, acc. no. 179BHS89[390]<790>.

³⁶ This Celtic name is not common, but is well attested as that of a samian potter (CARATIM). In Britain it is borne by one of the dedicators of the Foss Dyke Mars (*RIB* 274); also compare *RIB* II.7, 2501.127, *Caraticu[s]*.

NORFOLK

18. **Long Stratton** (TM 195 927). Silver ring of Brancaster type, dated *c.* A.D. 360–420, found³⁷ in *c.* 2000. The rectangular bezel, 11 by 9 mm, is inscribed within a dotted border: VTI | FELIX. ‘Use (this and be) happy.’³⁸

19. **Snettisham** (TF 6788 3383) (FIG. 14). Base sherd of a Central-Gaulish samian dish (Dr. 18/31R) stamped VXOPILLI (Antonine), found³⁹ in 2022. Neatly incised after firing underneath, within the foot-ring: OVN, the personal name *Oun*(. . .).⁴⁰



FIG. 14. Snettisham, samian graffito (No. 19) (photo: CFA Archaeology; drawing: R.S.O. Tomlin).

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

20. Near **Rushton** (SP 84 82), Roman bath-house. Cylindrical lead tank, *c.* 0.48 m in diameter, found⁴¹ in 1999. Within a panel with cable-moulded border, the panels to left and right each enclosing a moulded saltire cross in cable moulding, there is a moulded medallion: within a

³⁷ By a metal-detectorist and acquired by the British Museum after being declared Treasure in 2000. For a photograph and other details, see <https://britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_2005-0403-1>

³⁸ *uti* (infinitive) *felix* is a variant of the usual *utere* (imperative) *felix* formula found on four other finger-rings, *RIB* II.3, 2422.41 (Brafeld); 2423.29 (Kilbride); *Britannia* 37 (2006), 485, No. 59 (Ponthir); 41 (2010), 448, No. 10 (Hockcliffe). Abbreviated to VTF and VF, it is found on two more rings: *RIB* II.3, 2423.28 (Southwark); *Britannia* 47 (2016), 395, No. 10 (Lydney).

³⁹ During excavation by CFA Archaeology, for which see its Report No. MK 246/22, ‘Land at Poppyfields Drive, Snettisham, Norfolk’, by Alessio Auricchio-Bund and Rebecca Hunt. The graffito is noted on pp. 43 and 149, and was made available by James Walker.

⁴⁰ The graffito is complete and should be read this way up because the second stroke of V can be seen to cut the first. The un-Latin diphthong *-ou-* is frequent in Celtic personal names, some of which end in *-ounus/-ouna* (feminine), but only two are known to begin with this element, *Oumiccus* (*CIL* xiii 11399) and the god *Ouniorix*, uniquely attested by *CIL* xiii 4651. Either name might have been abbreviated here to OVN, but quite likely the first element was compounded with another now lost, which was omitted in abbreviation.

⁴¹ During excavation by the Ise Archaeological Research Society, and published by James Looker, ‘Another early Christian tank/font from Northamptonshire’, *Northamptonshire Archaeology* 28 (1998–99), 163–4, where it is said to be intended for Kettering Museum. For other lead tanks with a moulded Chi-Rho, see the next item (No. 21); *RIB* II.2,

circle, the ligatured Greek letters $\overline{\text{XP}}$. Its three arms are diameters in cable-moulding, its loop a detached oval. *Chi-Rho*.

OXFORDSHIRE

21. **Wigginton** (SP 392 334) Roman villa. Cylindrical lead tank, 0.21 m deep and c. 0.50 m in diameter, found⁴² in 2005. In one central panel, a medallion formed by cable-moulding: within a circular cable-moulded border, the ligatured Greek letters $\overline{\text{XP}}$. *Chi-Rho*.

SUFFOLK

22. Near **Halesworth** (TM 38 77). Silver finger-ring found⁴³ in 1999. Incised on the oval bezel: DE:M, probably *de(o) M(ercurio)*. 'To the god Mercury'.⁴⁴

23. Copper-alloy 'knee' brooch, 19 mm long, weight 20.6 g, said⁴⁵ to have been found in Suffolk, but no further details (FIG. 15). In moulded letters within a recessed panel on the bow: VITA VENI, *uita ueni*. '(My) life, come (to me)'.⁴⁶



FIG. 15. Brooch with moulded inscription (No. 23) (photo: TimeLine Auctions).

TYNE AND WEAR

24. **Wallsend** (*Segedunum*, NZ 300 660). An almost complete *mortarium* stamped ANAVS (dated c. A.D. 120–160), but now broken into twelve pieces, found⁴⁷ in 1997–98.

2416.8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14; *Britannia* 20 (1989), 333, No. 13; 31 (2000, 442, No. 42; and Belinda Crerar, 'Contextualising Romano-British lead tanks: a study in design, destruction and deposition', *Britannia* 43 (2012), 135–66.

⁴² During excavation by Phoenix Archaeology, and published by Paul Booth, Esther Cameron and Belinda Crerar, 'A Roman lead 'tank' from Wigginton, North Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia* 2011, 266–72.

⁴³ By a metal-detectorist, PAS ref. SF1101 (with drawing).

⁴⁴ DE is separated from M by a double medial point like a modern comma: for this very abbreviated legend compare the Narford silver ring inscribed DEM (*Britannia* 45 (2014), 445, No. 27, with note). A dedication to the god Mercury is suggested by the recent discovery in Suffolk of another silver ring dedicated to him: see *Britannia* 53 (2022), 524, No. 54 (MER), which cites (n. 82) five others. But these are all explicitly MER, whereas the present ring, like the Narford ring, might have been intended for Mars or Minerva instead.

⁴⁵ By TimeLine Auctions (4 June 2024, Lot 685).

⁴⁶ For 'knee' brooches with a similar moulded inscription, but reading VTERE FELIX, see *RIB* II.3, 2421.56–58. This is the first instance of VITA VENI from Britain, or indeed elsewhere, but the reverse sequence VENI VITA occurs on a copper-alloy finger-ring from Mainz (*CIL* xiii 10024, 80). *uita* ('life') was a term of endearment (*OLD* s.v. *uita* 5), used for example by Cicero in writing to his wife (*ad fam.* 14.4.1), *te quam primum, mea uita, cupio uidere*. 'My darling, I long to see you as soon as possible'.

⁴⁷ During the excavations published as N. Hodgson, *The Roman Fort at Wallsend: Excavations in 1997–1998* (2003), where this graffito is p. 183, No. 3, and illustrated at 184, fig. 129.3. It should have been noticed in *Britannia* (2003) like another item (*Britannia* (2003), 380, No. 49) from the same excavation.

Scratched after firing on the wall in angular letters: COMMVNIS, *Communis*. ‘(Property) of Communis’.⁴⁸

WILTSHIRE

25. **Alvediston** (ST 97 23) (FIG. 16). Copper-alloy pan (*trulla*) found⁴⁹ in 2022. The handle and rim are complete, but much of the bowl is missing. Neatly incised on the upper face of the handle, near its junction with the rim: †(XX. Probably a note of the price: ‘1, (*denarii*) 20.’⁵⁰

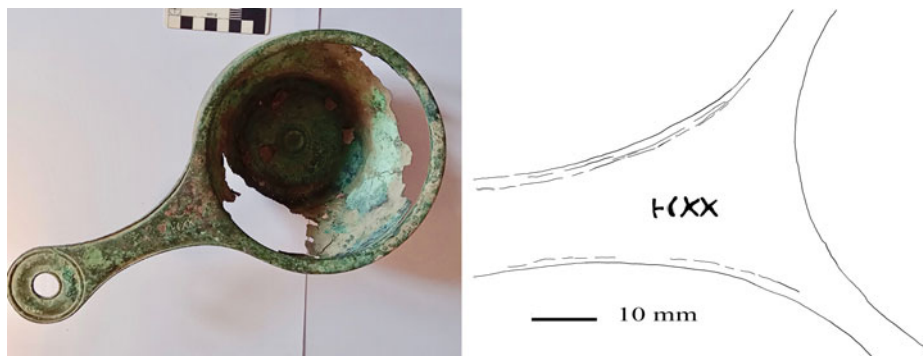


FIG. 16. Alvediston, copper-alloy *trulla* with graffito (No. 25) (photo: PAS; graffito drawn from it by R.S.O. Tomlin).

SCOTLAND

PERTH AND KINROSS

26. **Strageath** (NM 898 180) Roman fort. Base sherd of a South-Gaulish samian dish (Dr. 18/31, c. A.D. 120–45), found⁵¹ in 1976. Incised underneath after firing: RVFIVS, *Rufius*.⁵²

STIRLINGSHIRE

27. **Drumquhassle** Roman fort (NS 484 876). Handle-terminal of a copper-alloy pan (*trulla*) found⁵³ in c. 1999. Stamped: P·CIPi [. . .], ‘(product) of Publius Capius Polybius’.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Despite the samian bowl (*RIB* II.7, 2501.307) inscribed with a list of names followed by *uas communis*, ‘(their) common dish’, *communis* here is the owner’s name. It is quite a common cognomen, well attested in Britain: see *RIB* II.7, 2501.140; II.8, 2503.232; III, 3041; *Britannia* 24 (1993), 317. No. 9; *Tab. Lond. Bloomberg* 53.2 (with note).

⁴⁹ By a metal-detectorist in a hoard of copper-alloy scrap, PAS ref. WILT-DA6C21. Sophie Hawke, Finds Liaison Officer for Wiltshire, sent photographs and other details.

⁵⁰ The graffito is apparently complete. First a vertical stroke with a horizontal stroke at mid-height; then a gently curving stroke not wide enough for C; and finally XX. To judge by cruder graffiti found on two other *trullae* (*RIB* II, 2415.40 and 44), this is the numeral ‘1’ followed by an incomplete *denarius* sign (properly X with a horizontal stroke to the left), and then the numeral XX, ‘20’.

⁵¹ During the excavations published as S.S. Frere and J.J. Wilkes, *Strageath: Excavations within the Roman Fort* (1989), where this sherd is p. 268, No. 13, with fig. 134.13; for its date, see 212, S3 (stamped by Chresimus). It should have been included in *RIB* II.7, 2501, like the other samian graffito (268, No. 12) which is now 2501.523.

⁵² *Rufius* is much more common than *Rufius* as a cognomen, but a diminutive I is squeezed in between F and V, below the cross-strokes of F.

⁵³ In field-walking; noted by L.J.F. Keppie in *Britannia* 31 (2000), 381, as ‘stamped for P. Capius Polybius’.

⁵⁴ Now in the Hunterian Museum (GLAHM:112523), its inscription described by the University of Glasgow Collections website as ‘P CIPi’. It is presumably incomplete. For other *trullae* stamped by this Campanian bronze-smith, his cognomen variously spelt, see *RIB* II.2, 2415.17–27 (with p. 44) and *Britannia* 37 (2006), 484, No. 56.

C. ADDENDA ET CORRIGENDA

(a) **Traprain Treasure.** The inscriptions and graffiti on fragments of silver plate in this great hoard of *Hacksilber*, almost all of them in *RIB* II.2, 2414 (silver vessels) and 2420 (spoons), have been re-examined.⁵⁵ They are now published with fuller commentary, photographs and new drawings.⁵⁶ There is little change in the readings, but some have been improved, for example *RIB* II.2, 2414.22 (FIG. 17). This is two graffiti, not one; the names of successive owners, both now incomplete. (a) *INNOCE*[...], *Innoce*[ntius] or perhaps *Innoce*[ns].⁵⁷ (b) *MA*[...], *Mai*[...] or *Mal*[...].⁵⁸

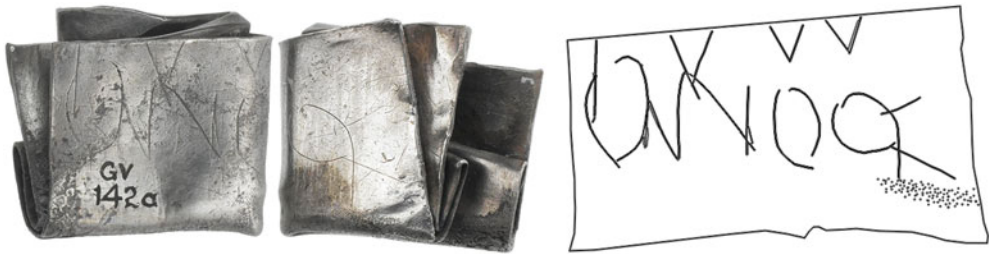


FIG. 17. Traprain Treasure, graffiti on scrap silver (Add. (a)) (photo: Fraser Hunter; drawing: Marion O'Neil).

(b) *RIB* II.6, 2493.77 and II.8, 2502.25 (South Shields) (FIG. 18). Wall sherd of an amphora inscribed before firing with the potter's signature: *Victoris*, '(the work) of Victor'. Both entries relate to the same sherd, and the second should now be deleted.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ At the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, by invitation of Fraser Hunter, with whom the readings were discussed. He is responsible for the new photographs and Marion O'Neil for the new drawings.

⁵⁶ F. Hunter, A. Kaufmann-Heinimann and K. Painter (eds), *The Late Roman Silver Treasure from Traprain Law* (2022), 286–309.

⁵⁷ As noted in *Britannia* 40 (2009), 362, Add. (f) with note. *RIB* draws the graffiti as if it were flat, without stating that the fragment is still folded upon itself (see FIG. 17 (a) above). Its drawing does not show that ON was written first, then corrected by being over-written with I and a ligated N. C was written with its second stroke extended downward and then to the right (where it is now lost in corrosion and damage due to the folding); thus forming the lowest horizontal stroke of E, before the other two were added.

⁵⁸ The drawing in *RIB* omits the third incomplete diagonal-pair of (b), which shows that they should be read as MA inverted as to (a), not as VV. The diagonals of Λ cut the first N of (a), showing that (b) was incised after (a). Many names are possible, but the only common one is *Maiores* and its derivatives.

⁵⁹ The graffiti was first published by Collingwood Bruce in *Arch. Ael.* n.s. 10 (1884–5), 252–3, the only source of *RIB* II, 2493.77, which notes the sherd as 'now lost'. But the same sherd was drawn by Wright in 1940 when it was in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle, and his record is the source of *RIB* II, 2502.25, which notes its identity with 2493.77, 'which should now be deleted'. However, he described it as 'part of a jug', apparently because it was stored with part of a stamped amphora handle in the same fabric. This is now evident because, when the Museum closed in 2008, both fragments were transferred to the Great North Museum: Hancock, where they are inv. no. NEWMA:1956.128.4.A. Photographs of them were sent by the Assistant Keeper of Archaeology, Jo Anderson. The same 'signature' has also been found at Vindolanda (*Britannia* 53 (2022), 520, No. 44, and see FIG. 18 (b) above), prompting Add. (d) on p. 530, which by mistake attributes *RIB* II, 2493.77 to 'Wallsend'.



FIG. 18. (a) Amphora sherd (South Shields) ‘signed’ by Victor (Add. (b)) (photo: Great North Museum: Hancock, Newcastle). (b) Another amphora sherd (Vindolanda) with the same signature (photo: R.S.O. Tomlin).

(c) **RIB II.6, 2494.131 and 176** (Malton) (FIG. 19). Both entries relate to the same Dressel 20 amphora sherd.⁶⁰ Its three (or perhaps four) surviving letters are incomplete and ambiguous, and might be read either way up.⁶¹



FIG. 19. Malton, amphora graffito (Add. (c)) (photo: Malton Museum).

(d) **RIB II.8, 2503.339** (Canterbury). As the line-drawing shows, this coarseware graffito should be read as [...]**MA·VR·V** [...], probably *Mauru[s]*.⁶²

(e) **Britannia 43 (2012), 398, No. 5** (Papcastle). Two-line fragment of an inscribed stone slab, the second line reading: [...]**TVAN**. Since its publication, two altars dedicated by the First Cohort

⁶⁰ As noted by D.F. Williams in L.P. Wenham and B. Heywood, *The 1968 to 1970 Excavations in the Vicus at Malton, North Yorkshire* (1997), 114. Photographs were sent from Malton Museum by David Snowden.

⁶¹ The centre letter looks more like V than (inverted) Λ or O, as shown in FIG. 19 above. To its left, the tip of a letter such as Λ or M, followed by O or S, looks more likely than a very wide O. To its right, a vertical stroke (for I), but with possible trace of a horizontal stroke mid-way for F or P.

⁶² Not *Maur[il]*. Only the tip survives of the letter after R, but its angle indicates V, not I. The two medial points enclosing VR cannot be explained.

of Vangiones have been found at the fort.⁶³ The line should now be read: [...][̄] VĀN, [*coh*(...)] *I Van(gionum)*.⁶⁴

(f) *Britannia* 45 (2015), 447, No. 33 and 50 (2019), 517, No. 38 (Vindolanda). Both entries relate to the same graffito on samian (sf 16703), illustrated respectively by a photograph and a line-drawing.

(g) *Britannia* 53 (2022), 516, No. 34 (Corby). This inscribed brick has now been drawn from the original (FIG. 20).⁶⁵ It reads: [...] | [...].ENTĪ | [...] FECIT, [...] / [...].*enti*[*nus*] *fecit*.⁶⁶



FIG. 20. Corby, brick graffito (Add. (g)) (drawing: R.S.O. Tomlin).

(h) *Britannia* 53 (2022), 516, No. 35 (Piddington). This inscribed lead tablet was not found at Piddington Roman villa, but fifteen miles to the north-east, in a field just outside the village of Chelveston (SP 99 72), Northants.⁶⁷

D. CHANGE OF LOCATION

RIB 1243 (Risingham). This fragment of a dedication slab has been stolen from Elsdon Church, Northumberland.⁶⁸

⁶³ *Britannia* 46 (2015), 388, No. 6 and item No. 2 above.

⁶⁴ What was read as T is the numeral 'I', a vertical stroke with a fine horizontal line at top and bottom, the first probably a superscript bar identifying it as a numeral. In the two altars just cited, this numeral was preceded by COH and followed by VĀN, both abbreviated. This is almost certainly so here, but the grammatical case of COH is unknown.

⁶⁵ For the final publication of the Priors Hall site by Oxford Archaeology (East).

⁶⁶ The graffito was probably three lines in all, the first line (a batch-total or date) having been lost entirely. F was made with an elongated top-stroke, the tip of which survives. Above it, the first surviving letter is an incomplete vertical stroke. This was tentatively read as T for [*Po*]tenti[nus], but the space to its right is rather wide if T were made with a short cross-stroke like T in FECIT. P seems more likely, therefore, as if for [*Re*]penti[nus]. Kajanto (*The Latin Cognomina*, pp. 247 and 296) notes 14 instances of *Potentinus* in *CIL* compared with 47 for *Repentinus*.

⁶⁷ Information from Liz Friendship-Taylor, who has spoken to the finders, Mick and Lynn Gardner of Piddington, in whose possession it remains. They brought it to Piddington Roman villa Museum for identification, which then made it available with items actually found at the villa (*Britannia* 47 (2016), 404–6, Nos. 19–21).

⁶⁸ In 2021 or later, according to BBC News (20 March 2024), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9706nq2nvjo>. Also stolen was another Roman stone, not identified, but perhaps the uninscribed altar mentioned in the note to *RIB* 1230.

E. ALIENA

(a) **South Ferriby** (North Lincs.). Copper-alloy die or stamp, 41 by 16 mm, displayed in Hull and East Riding Museum of Archaeology (FIG. 21).⁶⁹ In moulded capitals retrograde: C CINCI | APOLLONI, *G(ai) Cinc(i)i / Apollon(i)i*, ‘(the product) of Gaius Cincius Apollonius’. It is not in *RIB* II.1, 2409 (dies) and is probably the ‘signaculum’ with identical inscription found in Lyon (*Lugdunum*) or its vicinity, which was published in 1901 as *CIL* xiii, 10022.63.⁷⁰



FIG. 21. South Ferriby metal die (Alienum (a)) (photo: Scott Vanderbilt).

(b) Durham University, Museum of Archaeology (FIG. 22).⁷¹ Base sherd of a decorated samian bowl (Dr. 30 or 37, Lezoux), incised underneath before firing in cursive letters which have now

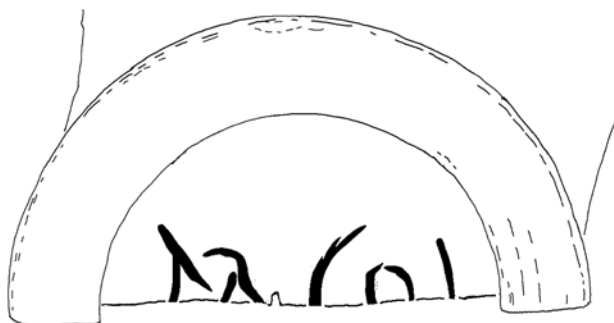


FIG. 22. Museum of Archaeology, Durham, samian graffito (Alienum (b)) (photo: Museum of Archaeology; drawn from it and a Museum rubbing by R.S.O. Tomlin).

⁶⁹ Acc. no. KINCM:2005.1221.163. The curator told Anthony Lee (who discusses the die in ‘Making a good impression’, his contribution of 18 February 2018 to the *Roman Lincolnshire Revealed* website) that it was acquired for the museum by its first curator, Thomas Sheppard (1876–1945). Sheppard was born in South Ferriby, a Roman site, prompting the assumption that he found the die there.

⁷⁰ It is there said to be ‘ap(ud) Greppo abbatem’, meaning that it was owned by Jean-Gabriel-Honoré Greppo (1788–1863), priest of a parish in Lyon who wrote on Roman archaeology. Since he had been dead by then for half a century, the implication is that nothing was known of its subsequent history; certainly it is not now in Lyon Museum (information from Laure de Chavagnac). A metal die, even if duplicated, would only be used in one place of manufacture; duplicates would not be found hundreds of miles apart. It is much easier to suppose that Greppo’s collection was dispersed after his death, and that the ‘signaculum’ was ultimately bought by Thomas Sheppard, well known as a collector of antiquities.

⁷¹ Acc. no. DURMA.1985.81.334. Part of the Oswald-Plicque Collection which Eric Birley bought for Durham University in 1950, for which see Sally Elizabeth Cottam, *A Study of the Work of Dr. Felix Oswald on the Oswald-Plicque Collection of Samian Pottery. Now at Durham University* (1991), Durham e-thesis online. She notes this sherd at p. 40 (drawn as pl. II, No. 4), observing that it was inscribed during manufacture ‘as the slip has coated the inside of the letters’. The graffito is thus the potter’s signature, not an ownership inscription.

lost their bottom half. They probably read: PR[.]SÇI, *Pr[i]sci*. '(The work) of Priscus'.⁷² This is the potter's signature, evidently Priscus of Lezoux. The sherd is now in Durham, but must have been found in excavation at Lezoux.⁷³

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⁷² The first letter is much more like P than A, the only other possibility. The second letter is certainly R, followed by a space, and then S. The next letter looks like O, but can be taken as C which was completed by a second stroke curving down to the foot of I, which must be the genitive termination. (The alternative sequence OI would be difficult.) The space between R and S suggests that a diminutive I was ligatured to the tip of R.

⁷³ Cottam does not offer a reading, but is otherwise doubtful of Oswald's attribution of this sherd to the potter Butrio of Lezoux. It is one of 94 sherds Oswald attributed to him, 91 of them from Lezoux, where Alfred-Edward Plicque excavated.