

The Roman Fortress at Carpow, Perthshire: an Alternative Interpretation of the
Gates and their Dedicatory Inscriptions

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

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APPENDIX 1: DESCRIPTION OF THE FRAGMENTS FROM THE EAST GATE

The large fragment, *RIB* III, 3512(a), found lying on the roadway face-up,¹ preserves the left side-panel of the slab and a small part of the die flanked by a plain *pelta* whose horns terminate in bird-heads and its central projection in a plain boss (FIG. 5).² In the upper half of a crowded side-panel, a winged victory, standing on a globe, holds a palm branch vertically; to her right a Capricorn swims left. Below her are two facing Pegasi, and what may be the head and outstretched wings of an eagle.³ On the die itself the vertical stroke of the first letter of the first line can be made out.⁴

¹ Dore and Wilkes 1999, 525 illus 35–36. The notation used here follows *RIB* III.

² Width 0.85 m, height 0.95 m, depth 0.2 m.

³ Keppie and Arnold (1984, no. 171) preferred to see here the head and wings of a second Victory figure.

⁴ On the lower moulding is a much smaller inscription, now very faint, which reads: [...]*P F* [...], [...]*p fe*[*c(it)* ...]. Perhaps to be understood as ‘[...]p made (this) [...]’. Wright suggested that these miniscule letters were a ‘signature’ of the stonemason, or part of a date (1964, 203).

The second fragment, *RIB III*, 3512(b), preserves a section of the plain upper moulding of the slab and letters of the first and second lines of the inscription (FIG. 6).⁵ There is a dowel hole in the top surface. The inscription reads: [...]MP E[...] / [...]S F[...]. There are no interpuncts but clear gaps indicate word-divisions. The letters have a uniform height of c. 0.15 m. It can be stated with reasonable confidence that there were four lines in all (excluding the lettering on the slab's lower border), with the lettering of the third and fourth lines somewhat smaller.

Three other fragments were recovered from the inner ditch south of the East Gate, the first (*RIB III*, 3512(c)) preserving most of a single letter V, the second (3512(d)) a likely horizontal superscript bar, the third (3512(e)) parts of the letters A and V, perhaps from two separate words, with a space below.⁶ Setting-out lines are visible on 3512(c) and very faintly on 3512(b). Other uninscribed fragments show mouldings which could belong on the upper or lower border.⁷ As only a small part of the inner ditch was examined on both sides of the gate, other inscribed fragments could lie there undetected.

It must be probable, from the size of the lettering and the likely length of each line, together with the smooth left-hand edge on one of the smaller fragments (*RIB III*, 3512(c)), that the inscription was cut on a series of stone panels, perhaps four or five in all, set together above the Gate.⁸ The grittiness of the fragments varied, which also suggests a number of separate panels.

The smaller fragments (*RIB III*, 3512(c), (d), (e)) cannot be placed with any certainty, but the sizes of the letters may act as a guide. Thus the letter V on 3512(c) could, from its apparent height (0.14–0.15 m), belong in the opening lines of the inscription (i.e. lines 1–2 or 1–3). The superscript bar on *RIB III*, 3512(d) could be from the numeral II of the Second Augustan Legion, likely to be named in line 4. Of the letters A and V on 3512(e), the latter,

⁵ Width 0.68 m, height 0.57 m, depth 0.19 m.

⁶ Fragment (c): width 0.22 m, height 0.23 m, depth 0.14 m; (d): width 0.14 m, height 0.16 m, depth 0.1 m; (e): width 0.18 m, height 0.15 m, depth 0.11 m.

⁷ Wright 1966, 219, n. 12; Dore and Wilkes 1999, 527, no. 6.

⁸ The careful drawings prepared for *RIB III* by R.D. Grasby could be understood as showing that the vertical length of the single letter partially preserved on fragment *RIB III*, 3512(a) does not match the heights of the letters on fragment 3512(b). The width of the upper moulding also fails to match. See *RIB III*, 3512 at p. 459.

arguably the first letter of a word, might be from V[EX], a *vexillatio* (detachment) of the legion, again in line 4.⁹

Two fragments of what appeared to be a quite different slab were also recovered at the East Gate.¹⁰ The larger fragment (*RIB* III 3513(a)) preserves part of a letter L, with gaps to its right and below. It was recovered from ‘the fill of the stone-lined drain’ in the south passage of the gate, where the fill had been ‘laid to support the road surface’ on to which Fragments 3512(a) and (b) ‘had fallen and sunk’.¹¹ The height of the single letter L appears likely to match those on Fragment 3512(b), but the cutting is shallow.¹² The smaller fragment (3513(b)), if it is inscribed at all, bears a letter P or B or R; it came from the fill of the inner ditch south of the gate, like the fragments of 3512 noticed above.¹³ There could be some suspicion that, despite being grittier in texture, it really belongs with them. In their final report the excavators followed R.P. Wright in considering that the larger fragment (3513(a)) ‘must have come from an inscription of an earlier period and have sustained substantial damage during an intermediate stage of re-use’;¹⁴ it was worn and battered, quite unlike the two fragments (3512(a) and (b)) found atop the roadway. In truth, with its uneven front face, the large fragment bears little resemblance to a dedication slab. It could, for that matter, have derived from a quite different building, inside or outside the fortress.

APPENDIX 2: RESTORATIONS OF THE EAST GATE INSCRIPTION BY PETER WARRY AND JOHN CASEY

Basing his restoration on Wright’s arrangement of the wording, Peter Warry proposed reading *[i]mp(erator) e[st] d(ominus) n(oster) M(arcus) Aur(elius) Commodus / Piu]s F[elix] ...].*¹⁵ ‘Emperor and Our Lord Marcus Aurelius Commodus, Dutiful, Fortunate ...’

John Casey’s more extended restoration, also naming Commodus, was spread over three lines: *[i]mp(erator) e[st] deus Caesar Lucius Aelius Aurelius Commodus Aug(ustus) / Piu]s F[elix] Sarm(aticus) Ger(manicus) Max(imus) Brit(annicus) Pacator Orbis Invictus /*

⁹ The A would thus be the final letter of the preceding word. Tomlin (on *RIB* III, 3512 at p. 460) argues for the presence here of AV[G], abbreviated from *Augusta*; but the letters look to be too far apart.

¹⁰ Width 0.51 m, height 0.53 m; depth 0.23 m.

¹¹ Wright 1966, 219, no. 8; Dore and Wilkes 1999, 528, nos 7–8.

¹² The drawing in *RIB* III at p. 462 gives an exaggerated impression of its monumentality.

¹³ Width 0.16 m, height 0.1 m, depth 0.06 m.

¹⁴ Wright 1966, 219, n. 13; *RIB* III, 3513; Tomlin 2017, 169.

¹⁵ Warry 2006, 68.

Herc(ules) Rom(anus) p(ontifex) m(aximus) tr(ibunicia) p(otestate) XVIII imp(erator) VIII co(n)s(ul) VII p(ater) p(atriciae).¹⁶ ‘Emperor and God Lucius Aelius Aurelius Commodus Augustus, Dutiful, Fortunate, Conqueror of the Sarmatians, Greatest Conqueror of the Germans, Conqueror of the Britons, Pacifier of the World, Unconquered, the Roman Hercules, chief priest, holder of tribunician power for 19 years, saluted successful commander eight times, consul seven times, Father of his Country.’ This reconstruction placed the inscription in the final year of Commodus’ reign, A.D. 192. However, Casey’s text is over-long and includes improbable elements.

APPENDIX 3: DESCRIPTION OF THE FRAGMENTS FROM THE SOUTH GATE

The largest fragment (*RIB* III, 3514(a)) preserved part of the right-hand side-panel showing a bird-headed *pelta* in high relief, carved to represent plumage, with a small vine-leaf and grape-cluster, and the greater part of a laurel wreath with dependent fillet (FIG. 8).¹⁷ There is a cramp-hole in the top surface. Two smaller fragments, one (3514(b)) bearing the lower half of the letter A with plain mouldings below and the other (3514(c)) part of an indeterminate letter, possibly L, were also recovered.¹⁸ A remnant of what was interpreted as a leaf-stop interpunct was detected immediately to the left of the letter on 3514(c),¹⁹ in which case the surviving letter should mark the beginning of a new word. The letter A on fragment *RIB* III, 3514(b), which has an estimated height of 0.105 m, is smaller than those on the East Gate slab, presumably because it belongs in the final line of the inscription. It could be part of the word *Augusta*, the title of the Second Legion, or be from the title of a legate, *legatus Augusti pro praetore*.²⁰

APPENDIX 4: THREE POSSIBLE RESTORATIONS OF THE EAST GATE INSCRIPTION

1. Using nominative case-endings and restricting Severus’ titlature to a single line, one restoration of the first three lines could be:

¹⁶ Casey 2010, 233.

¹⁷ Width 0.47 m; height 0.47 m; depth 0.22 m.

¹⁸ Fragment (b): width 0.35 m, height 0.25 m, depth 0.18 m; (c): width 0.17 m, height 0.07 m, depth 0.1 m.

¹⁹ No leaf-stops were present on the surviving fragments from the East Gate.

²⁰ Wright and Hassall 1971, 292, no. 15; Tomlin in *RIB* III, p. 463 on *RIB* 3514.

I[MP C L SEPT SEVERVS AVG PROCOS PROPAG I]MP E[T /
 IMP C M AVR ANTONINVS PIVS FELIX AVG PROCO]S E[T /
 IMP C P SEPTIMIVS GETA AVG ...]

*I[mp(erator) C(aesar) L(ucius) Sept(imius) Severus Aug(ustus) proco(n)s(ul) propag(ator)
 i]mp(erii) e[t / imp(erator) C(aesar) M(arcus) Aur(elius) Antoninus Pius Felix Aug(ustus)
 proco(n)]s(ul) e[t / imp(erator) C(aesar) P(ublius) Septimius Geta Aug(ustus) ...]²¹*

Severus is given one line, as are Caracalla and Geta. However, this restoration is not without difficulties. We are obliged to suppose that several of Severus' personal names such as Pius and Pertinax, as well as epithets of conquest and magistracies held, were omitted.

2. A more plausible alternative could therefore be that the names and titles of the senior emperor, Septimius Severus, extended over two lines. The phrase *propagator imperii* would thus come not at end of his titles but, as more frequently, in the middle of the sequence. The abbreviation *procos* at the end of line 2 would thus be the final title borne by Severus himself, with the *et* introducing the titles of Caracalla and perhaps Geta in the following line.²² Severus is regularly allotted more space on inscriptions than his co-emperor Caracalla and much more than the younger son, Geta. The name(s) of the legion or legions responsible, the governor of Britain, and their legate(s) would be restricted to the fourth line.²³

The occurrence of ET in line 1 of our fragment could therefore indicate an element of linked titulature. Severus is honoured on inscriptions with a number of fulsome titles, for example *pacator orbis et fundator imperii Romani* ('pacifier of the world and founder of the Roman empire').²⁴ Trajan in A.D. 107/8 had been designated *propagator orbis terrarum* ('enlarger of the world'), presumably the Roman world, which he had recently enlarged by

²¹ The restoration assumes a date after late A.D. 209 when Geta ceased to be *nobilissimus Caesar* and became *Augustus*, joint emperor with his father and elder brother.

²² For Severus, Caracalla and Geta named together on records of building work in Britain, see *RIB* 333, 722, 740, 746, 1151, 1234, 1462, 1909, 2266; *RIB* III, 3215.

²³ The names of the governor of Britain, or of the governors of Upper and Lower Britain if the division of the province had already occurred, at the very end of Severus' reign, are not known.

²⁴ *CIL* II 1969; *CIL* VIII 21613. For imperial epithets and titles in use during the Severan period see Ando 2000, 182; Rowan 2012, *passim*.

the conquest of Dacia.²⁵ One option here could therefore be that Severus is described as *propagator imperii et orbis terrarum* ('enlarger of the empire and of the world'),²⁶ titles reflecting his conquests in Parthia and of course, more recently, in Britain. Thus the first two lines of the inscription at Carpow could be restored to read:

I[MP CAES L SEP SEVERVS PIVS PERT AVG PROPAG I]MP E[T /
ORBIS TERRARVM P M TR P XVIII COS III PROCO]S E[T /

*I[mp(erator) Caes(ar) L(ucius) Sep(timius) Severus Pius Pert(inax) Aug(ustus) propag(ator)
i]mp(erii) e[t / orbis terrarum p(ontifex) m(aximus) tr(ibunicia) p(otestate) XVIII, co(n)s(ul)
III proco](n)s(ul) e[t / ...]*

The magistracies are appropriate to the year A.D. 210.

3. Given that the text still seems congested, another possibility could be that it commemorates not three emperors but two, viz. Caracalla and Geta, with the former's names and titles occupying two lines and those of Geta the third. Thus an alternative restoration of the first two lines, with magistracies Caracalla held in A.D. 211, could be:

I[MP C M AVR ANTONINVS PIVS FEL AVG PROPAG I]MP E[T /
ORBIS TERRARVM P M TR P XIII COS III PROCO]S E[T /

*I[mp(erator) C(aesar) M(arcus) Aur(elius) Antoninus Pius Fel(ix) Aug(ustus) propag(ator)
i]mp(erii) e[t / orbis terrarum p(ontifex) m(aximus) tr(ibunicia) p(otestate) XIII co(n)s(ul)
III proco](n)s(ul) e[t / ...]*

However the historical context is inimical to such a scenario. After Severus' death in February 211, Caracalla (and Geta) soon left Britain, reaching Rome, it would seem, by April

²⁵ *CIL* VI 958 = 40500, 40501.

²⁶ Severus' wife Julia Domna, in Britain in A.D. 208–11, was celebrated under her son Caracalla as *mater castrorum et imperii et senatus et patriae* (*ILS* 426, 437).

of that year.²⁷ We have to suppose that construction work at Carpow continued for a while after their departure, overseen by the governor of Britain, before the site was given up.

EPIGRAPHIC CORPORA

AE L'Année Epigraphique, Paris, 1888 onwards

CIL Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Berlin, 1873 onwards

ILS Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae, Berlin, 1892–1906

RIB The Roman Inscriptions of Britain, Volume 1. Inscriptions on Stone, Oxford, 1965

RIB III The Roman Inscriptions of Britain, Volume 3. Inscriptions on Stone found or notified between 1 January 1955 and 31 December 2006, Oxford, 2009

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²⁷ *CIL* VI 40638 = *AE* 1996, 90. See Alföldy 1996; Clauss 1999, 175.