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THE IDENTITY OF THE IGNOTUS IN CIL VIII 1578

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This inscription from Mustis (Africa Proconsularis) is a fragmentary dedication in honour of a third-century emperor and empress whose names have been erased and not reinstated, probably Elagabalus and his mother Iulia Soaemias. The dedicators were a lady and her two sons, *Maria Lucina flam(inica) et L(ucius) Fulvius Kastus Ful[vianus] fisci advocatus patrimoni tr]act(us) Kart(haginiensis) et Galliae Narbo[nensis] ... et ...] Britanniae inferior(is) fili eius*. The restoration is due to H.-G.Pflaum (Carrières, No.311); and for the second son, the *ignotus*, an equestrian post in Lower Britain is required. Pflaum offers *trib. mil. leg. VI Victricis* (?), a tribunate in the province's only legion. He draws attention to two other third-century African inscriptions which refer to military postings to Lower Britain in this way: *praef. coh. II Astu(rum) prov. Britt. infer. and ex leg. VI Vi(ctrice) [pia] fidelis (sic) provinci(a)e Britanni(a)e inferioris*.¹ The suggestion is noted by H.Devijver (Prosopographia, F 91). A.R.Birley, however, has suggested (Fasti, 194-5) that the *ignotus* may be M.Valerius Fulvianus, *praefectus equitum* at Binchester (RIB 1029).

A recent discovery, not at Binchester, but at the neighbouring fort of Lanchester (*Longovicium*) now offers a better solution. In October 1986 the greater part of the base and die of a buff sandstone altar was ploughed up on the site of the vicus.² The surviving text (Fig. 1) reads:

[...]LING
 [...]Q[.]C·P·
 [...]VLVIVS
 [...]IXPRAEF

The *A* is open, the *G* and *L*s are of cursive form, the *Q* with horizontal tail is found in another inscription from Lanchester (RIB 1092).

The text, although fragmentary, is straightforward. The formula *c(ui) p(raeest)* indicates an altar dedicated officially by a military unit and its commanding officer. The god is usually Jupiter, a dedication confirmed by the eight-spoked wheel carved in high relief on the right-hand side of the column.³ The unit responsible must be the *Coh. I Lingonum*, already attested at Lanchester in the third century.⁴ A second-century inscription from High Rochester (RIB 1276) informs us that the cohort was *equitata*. The name of its commanding

¹ CIL VIII 2766 with 18131 = ILS 2762 (Lambaesis); VIII 5180 with 17266 = ILS 539.I (Zattara).

² By Mr. A.N.Greenwell of Greenwell Ford, Lanchester, in whose possession the stone remains. I am grateful to him for allowing me to examine and publish it.

³ Inscribed altars bearing the wheel-symbol in Britain (RIB 827, 1877, 1981, 1983) are all dedicated to Jupiter by military units: see M.J.Green, *The Wheel as a Cult-Symbol in the Romano-Celtic World* (1984), 345-7.

⁴ RIB 1091, 1092 (both A.D. 238/44, 1075).

officer at Lanchester is [...]*Julvius* [...]*ix*. The cognomen can only be *Felix*, thus determining the width of the missing portion. The previous line has therefore lost three letters, including the damaged *V*; and if we allow one letter for the praenomen, the nomen can only be *Fulvius* or *Mulvius*. It is long odds on *Fulvius*. A.Mócsy in the Nomenclator collects 107 instances of *Fulvius* to 14 of *Mulvius* (men and women). The ratios in the indexes of CIL VI and VIII are c. 240:10 and c. 50:2 respectively. [*F*]*ulvius* also fits the space available better than [*M*]*ulvius*. In the light of these considerations, therefore, the text of the altar can be almost completely restored:

[I O M]
[COH I] LING
[·E]Q[·]C·P·
[.] [F]VLVIVS
[FEL]IX PRAEF

[*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)*] / [*Coh(ors) (prima)*] *Ling(onum) / [e]q(uitata) c(ui) p(raeest) / [.] [F]ulvius / [Feli]x praef(ectus)*

The prefect's name, [.] *Fulvius Felix*, is not distinctive, but he could well be the *ignotus* in the Mustis inscription. The nomen is common in the western provinces, Africa included. *Felix* likewise is a popular cognomen, but was favoured in Africa: I.Kajanto (Cognomina, 273) notes that 1,238 of a total of 3,542 instances come from Africa. The combination *Fulvius Felix* is notably common in CIL VI (9 instances, none of them an *eques*); otherwise it occurs only twice in CIL: XI 5228 (Fulginae, in a list of names) and VIII 1601 (Mustis, as it happens). The latter is C.Fulvius C. filius Cornelia Felix, presumably a native of Mustis, since it was enrolled in *Cornelia*. Since he died at age 65 without further details being recorded, he is not to be identified with the prefect at Lanchester, but he proves that the name *Fulvius Felix* was current at Mustis, and a tie of kinship or descent might be surmised. These considerations support the compelling reason for identifying the *ignotus* of Mustis with the prefect at Lanchester they are both called *Fulvius*, and they both held an equestrian military post in Lower Britain in the third century. To Pflaum's restoration of CIL VIII 1578 we can surely add: [*et [.] Fulvius Felix praef. coh. I Lingonum eq. (or similar)*] *Britanniae inferior(is)*.

Two small benefits accrue to the history of Roman Britain. First, yet another equestrian officer from Africa, or rather, his name. Second, a likely date of A.D. 218/22 for the new altar, and thus a record of the *Coh. I Lingonum* at Lanchester twenty years earlier than the two building inscriptions of A.D. 238/44.⁵ In default of excavation, they have been taken as evidence of the fort's reoccupation after many years, perhaps half a century, of disuse.⁶ They record the construction of baths with *basilica*, and the restoration of the *principia* and

⁵ RIB 1091, 1092.

⁶ By K.A.Steer in Trans. Arch. and Arch. Soc. Durham and Northumberland vii (1934),214, followed by other authorities, but already doubted by B.Dobson, *ibid.*, n.s. ii (1970),35.

armouries. In the light of this new inscription, they need only be seen as evidence of necessary maintenance work, or, if *conlapsa* (RIB 1092) be taken literally, as evidence of the neglect of essential buildings by a garrison which had been there already for at least twenty years.

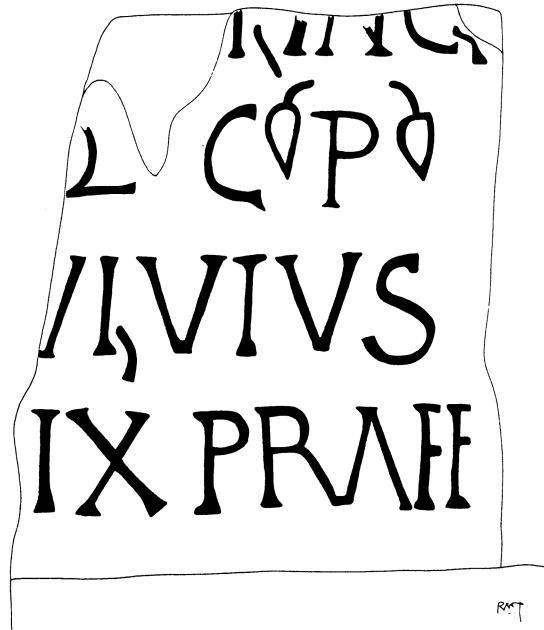


Fig. 1. Altar from Lanchester. Scale 1:4.