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AUXILIARY UNITS ENTITLED AELIA

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AUXILIARY UNITS ENTITLED AELIA¹

From the reign of Augustus auxiliary regiments were given various titles to help distinguish units from others of similar name and number. One method was for the emperor to bestow his family name on a unit either at its creation or for distinguished service. At present there are nine cohorts known with the title Aelia.²

1) Cohors I Aelia Athoitorum

An inscribed altar discovered at Loveč in Bulgaria gives the full name of this cohort (AE 1979, 554). This reads as follows:

*Herc. Invi. / C. Menius Sabi/nus mil. coh. I / Aeliae Athoit. e/
?bereciuc ... voltum e signum pos/uit*

The earliest dated inscription of the cohort is a fragmentary building inscription of c. AD 205–208 found at Kabyle in Bulgaria (SEG 42, 1992, 646).³ Here it is called *cohors I Athoitoru[m]*. There is also a Greek dedication of the reign of Caracalla set up by Aurelius Julianus ἀκτόριος σπείρης α' Ἀθοειτῶν Ἀντωνινιανῆς which was found at Lozenec also in Bulgaria (IGBulg III,2 1835). Since Lozenec is just north east of Kabyle it would suggest the unit was the garrison of Kabyle in the third century and possibly earlier.⁴ The cohort was therefore part of the garrison of Thrace.

While the name of the cohort is clear where it was raised is not. It has been suggested that it was raised in the peninsula of Mount Athos because the inhabitants were called Ἀθωίτης according to Stephen of Byzantium.⁵ The inscription from Loveč has been restored to read the unit name as *cohors I Aelia Athoit(orum) e(t) Berec(ynthorum)*.⁶ But it should be noted that Strabo said that the latter tribe, from Phrygia, had ceased to exist by his day, in the reign of Augustus (Strabo 12.8.21).⁷ The relevant inscription is unclear at this point of the text so the reading which has been proposed is very uncertain.

There has also been the suggestion that, in origin, the cohort was a local militia.⁸ This deserves further investigation especially in relation to the 50 or so *strategiae* of Thrace which existed in the first

¹ I should like to thank Dr. Margaret Roxan, Dr. Roger Tomlin and Prof. John Mann for commenting on earlier versions of all or part of this article. The following abbreviations are used: PME = H. Devijver, *Prosopographia militarium equestrium quae fuerunt ab Augusto ad Gallienum*, I–III, Louvain, 1976–80; IV, Suppl. 1, Louvain, 1987; V, Suppl. 2, Louvain, 1993. RMD I = M. M. Roxan, *Roman military diplomas, 1954–1977*, London, 1978; RMD II = M. M. Roxan, *Roman military diplomas, 1978–1984*, London, 1985; RMD III = M. M. Roxan, *Roman military diplomas, 1985–1993*, London, 1994.

² For previous reigns, see P. A. Holder, *Studies in the auxilia of the Roman army from Augustus to Trajan*, BAR Suppl. Ser. 70, Oxford 1980, 14–18.

³ It is apparently recorded on a new, but unpublished, diploma for Thrace which is dated to late in the reign of Antoninus Pius. (Information from M. M. Roxan.)

⁴ V. Velkov, *Cohors II Lucensium equitata in Moesia and Thrace*, *AArchHung* 41, 1989, 251.

⁵ Stephen p. 36. This suggestion was made by G. Mihailov in his commentary to IGBulg III,2 1835. However, L. Robert rejected the proposal but without suggesting an alternative (*Bull. ép.*, 1960, 169 n. 223).

⁶ V. Gerassimova-Tomova, *Novo svedenie za cohors I Athoitorum et Berecynthorum*, *Muzei i Pametnici na Kulturata*, 1979, 17–19.

⁷ Indeed, in the new edition of Pauly–Wissowa the tribe is considered to be mythical. (*Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike*, Bd. 2, 564.)

⁸ B. Gerov, *Die Krisis in den Ostbalkanländern während der Alleinregierung des Marcus Aurelius*, *AAntHung* XVI, 1968, 336.

century AD before finally being abolished in the reign of Hadrian.⁹ As it happens there is a Greek inscription from Nicopolis ad Nestum which names a number of *strategiae* among which is that of Ἀθιοῦτικὴ (IGBulg IV 2338). This is usually identified with the *strategia* of Ἀσουτικὴ.¹⁰ While the spellings are not identical the linking of *Athoitorum* with Ἀθιοῦτικὴ is linguistically acceptable especially as each name occurs so rarely in the epigraphic record. This, at least, demonstrates a likely Thracian origin. The abolition of the *strategiae* by Hadrian would then have provided the opportunity to convert a local militia into a regular unit thereby preserving a specific ethnic origin which afterwards ceased to exist.

There is no evidence to suggest that this cohort was either *milliaria* or *equitata*.

2) Cohors I Aelia Brittonum milliaria equitata

Raised in Britain, this cohort is first attested on the career inscription of T. Appalio Alfinus Secundus from Firmum Piceni (ILS 1417 = PME I,IV,V, A153):

*T. Appalio T. f. Vel. / Alfino Secundo / proc. August. XX hered. /
proc. Alpi. Atrectianar. / praef. vehicul. subpraef. / class. praet. Ravenn. pr. /
alae I Aug. Thrac. trib. coh. / I Aeliae Britton. praef. / coh. IIII Gallor.
patron. / colon. flaminii divor. / omnium augur. / Ilvir. quinq. bis /
ob merita eius / d.d.*

He commanded the unit in Noricum in the capacity of tribune as his *militia secunda* apparently late in the reign of Hadrian.¹¹ The only other record is an altar set up in Virunum on 1st February AD 238 (ILS 2524 + add). One of the dedicants was Aelius Martius, *s(ummus) c(urator)* of the cohort.¹² As the *summus curator* was responsible for the distribution of provisions to the cavalry element of a unit, *cohors I Aelia Brittonum* was *equitata*.¹³

While there is no specific evidence for this unit to be *milliaria* the fact that it was commanded by a tribune as the *militia secunda* normally indicates that it was milliary.

3) Cohors I Aelia classica equitata

Raised from the fleet, the earliest record of this cohort is in the career inscription of L. Volusius Maecianus found at Ostia (XIV 5347 = PME II,IV,V, V133):

*L. Volusio L. f. / Maeciano / praefecto Aegypti / praef. annonae pontif. m. /
a libellis et censibus imp. / Antonini Aug. Pii a studis et / proc.
bibliothecarum praef. / vehiculorum a libellis / Antonini Aug. Pii sub divo /
Hadriano. adiutori o.p. praef. coh. I Aeliae / classicae praef. fabrum /
patrono coloniae / decurionum / decreto publice*

⁹ B. Gerov, *Landownership in Roman Thracia and Moesia, 1st–3rd century*, Amsterdam 1988, 35–42.

¹⁰ B. Gerov, *ibid.*, 37.

¹¹ This is based on his close relationship with Gavius Maximus, Praetorian Prefect under Antoninus Pius. (H. G. Pflaum, *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain*, Paris 1960–61, n. 144 has the evidence.)

¹² It seems unlikely that the post should be expanded as *s(ingularis) c(onsularis)* even though the altar was set up in the provincial capital, the main base of the governor. (M. P. Speidel, *Guards of the Roman armies*, Bonn 1978, 70, 81–82.) This inscription has also been reported as AE 1974, 500 but with the omission of this person's name.

¹³ M. P. Speidel, *The career of a strator and summus curator*, Roman Army Studies Vol. 2, Stuttgart 1992, 137–139.

The cohort was in existence before the death of Hadrian because Maecianus afterwards served as a *libellis Antonini Aug Pii sub divo Hadriano*. This post lasted from 25th February to 10th July AD 138.¹⁴ The unit is then recorded on the diploma of AD 145/6 for Britain (RIB 2401.10). Thus those eligible for discharge at that time would have been recruited c. AD 121 which could be when the unit was created. This would fit in with what Hadrian was planning for Britain. Yet it is also feasible that the unit came into existence as the result of a vexillation being converted into a cohort. A vexillation of the *classis Britannica* is attested building at the fort at Benwell on Hadrian's Wall on an inscription dating to AD 122/126 (RIB 1340). The good work of these men during the construction of the Wall might have led to the vexillation being given a permanent existence as an auxiliary cohort with enhanced conditions of service.

There is a building stone of the cohort almost certainly from the Vallum of Hadrian's Wall which was most likely set up when it was being built late in the reign of Hadrian.¹⁵ The lack of the epithet Aelia is not a problem because such ephemeral stones rarely carry a unit's full titles. The diploma of AD 158 for Britain was issued to a cavalryman of the cohort.¹⁶ This was found on the shore by the Roman fort at Ravenglass in Cumbria. A lead seal of the cohort has also been found there in a third-century context (RIB 2411.94). This combined evidence would suggest that the cohort was stationed at Ravenglass and that it was still there when the *Notitia Dignitatum* was drawn up. Therefore the Roman name of Ravenglass would have been Tunnocelum (*Not. Dig. Occ. XL,51*).

4) Cohors I Aelia Dacorum milliaria

Raised in Dacia, this cohort is first attested with its honorific title on a diploma for Britain of 20th August AD 127 as *cohors I Ael(ia) Dac(orum) (milliaria)*.¹⁷ This evidence invalidates earlier discussions of the origin of the unit.¹⁸ The diploma shows that the men discharged then would have been recruited in AD 102 or a little earlier. There are a number of possible explanations for this. The date might represent when the cohort was raised by Trajan from Dacians settled within the Empire. The award by Hadrian would then have been a battle honour. The only opportunity for gaining such an award would have been on the Lower Danube early in Hadrian's reign if, indeed, the trouble was serious enough. Alternatively the unit was raised by Hadrian early in his reign, hence the honorific title, and those men discharged in AD 127 were part of the cadre around which the unit was formed. It is also conceivable that, in origin, it was a *numerus Dacorum* raised by Trajan which was converted to a cohort by Hadrian. (This question will be looked at in more detail below.)

By the third century AD it formed the garrison of Birdoswald on Hadrian's Wall where it is attested on a number of inscriptions. The earliest recorded date is the governorship of Alfenus Senecio, AD 205/8, from a building dedication (RIB 1909). It was still there when the *Notitia Dignitatum* was drawn up (*Not. Dig. Occ. XL,44*).

On the diplomas for Britain of AD 145/6 (RIB 2401.10) and AD 158 (P. A. Holder, *op. cit.*, (n. 13) it is called *cohors I Aelia Dacorum* without any indication of size. On the former diploma no units are indicated as being as milliary. However, two cohorts are recorded as milliary on the latter diploma. These are *cohors I Aug. Nerv. Germanorum (milliaria)* and *cohors I Vardullorum (milliaria)*. There is

¹⁴ H. G. Pflaum, *op. cit.*, n. 141.

¹⁵ Brit. 18, 1987, 368 n. 9.

¹⁶ P. A. Holder, A Roman military diploma from Ravenglass, Cumbria, Bull. John Rylands Univ. Lib. of Manchester Vol. 79,1, 1997, 3–41.

¹⁷ J. Nollé, Militärdiplome für einen in Britannien entlassenen 'Daker', ZPE 117, 1997, 269–276.

¹⁸ M. G. Jarrett, Non-legionary troops in Roman Britain, Brit. 25, 1994, 45–46; P. A. Holder, The Roman army in Britain, London 1982, 115. Therefore, neither the lack of honorific title on building stones from the Vallum (RIB 1365) and from Birdoswald (RIB 1918) nor its apparent mention without epithet on an altar from Bewcastle (RIB 991) has a bearing on the date of the award of the title Aelia.

also no record of it being *milliaria* on any of the inscriptions from Birdoswald although there is a long series of altars to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and two building dedications all of third century date. All of these reveal tribunes as commanders, normally an indication of milliary status for a cohort. It may be that a vexillation had been detached and was elsewhere. In this respect it may be instructive to compare the surviving records of the other known milliary cohorts in Britain in the third century:

Cohors I Nerviana Germanorum milliaria is not recorded as milliary on the one altar from Bewcastle where it is named (RIB 966).

Cohors I Aelia Hispanorum milliaria is recorded as milliary on one altar (RIB 968) and two dedications (RIB 978, 980).¹⁹

Cohors I Tungrorum milliaria at Housesteads is recorded as milliary on two altars (RIB 1580, 1586).²⁰

Cohors II Tungrorum milliaria is recorded as milliary on two altars from Castlesteads which also imply only part of the cohort was based there (RIB 1981, 1982).²¹

Cohors I Vangionum milliaria stationed at Risingham, an outpost of Hadrian's Wall, is recorded as milliary on one altar (RIB 1231) and one dedication (RIB 1234).²²

Cohors I Vardullorum milliaria is recorded at High Rochester, an outpost of Hadrian's Wall, as milliary on one altar (RIB 1263) and one dedication (RIB 1279).²³

This evidence shows that the other known milliary cohorts in Britain in the early third century are recorded as such on at least one of their surviving inscriptions with the exception of *cohors I Nerviana Germanorum milliaria* for which only one altar survives. This might indicate that *cohors I Aelia Dacorum* was not milliary at this time.

The one career record of a tribune of *cohors I Aelia Dacorum* unfortunately does not help. This inscription, giving the career of Tib. Claudius Proculus Cornelianus, was set up at Lambaesis and reads (AE 1956, 123 = PME I,IV,V, C174):

*Ti. Cl. Proculo / Corneliano / praef. coh. II Bra. / trib. coh. mil. Ael. /
Dacor. praef. al. / Sulpiciae proc. / provinc. Syriae / ad rationes putandas /
proc. metal. Pannonic. / et Dalmaticorum proc. / kalend. vegetiani in Hisp. /
item ad dilectum cum / Iulio Vero per / Italiam tironum / II leg. Italicae /
proc. regionis / Thevestinae / proc. III p.A. / Inventus / Aug. lib. tabul. /
leg. III Aug.*

From this it is clear that the cohort is recorded in a peculiar way with no numeral. In its place is the abbreviation *mil.* but it is not clear whether this represents milliary strength or a misplaced *mil(itum)* to represent rank. There are a number of units which customarily have a milliary sign or an abbreviation preceding their ethnic name. These are *cohors I milliaria Delmatarum* (PME I,IV,V, I110; PME II,V, S4; PME I, G24) and *cohors I milliaria Hemesenorum sagittariorum* (PME I, I5; PME II,IV,V, M65; PME II,IV, P98; PME II,IV,V, V43). For other cohorts there are single instances but in the majority of cases it is clear what is meant. Those in question are *cohors [I mill]aria Brittonum* (PME IV,V, Inc. 166bis); *cohors II milliaria Delmatarum* (PME I, A117); *cohors III Ulpia milliaria Petraeorum* (PME

¹⁹ On RIB 976, 977, 979 the unit's titles do not survive complete.

²⁰ It is not recorded as milliary on four altars (RIB 1578, 1579, 1584, 1591). The unit's titles do not survive complete on RIB 1585, 1587, 1598.

²¹ On one altar (RIB 1983) and one dedication (RIB 1999) it is not recorded as milliary.

²² It is not recorded as milliary on three altars (RIB 1215, 1216, 1217) and two dedications (RIB 1235, 1241). On the altar (RIB 1230) the unit's titles do not survive complete.

²³ It is not recorded as milliary on one altar (RIB 1262) and one dedication (RIB 1272). Its titles do not survive complete on RIB 1280, 1281.

II,IV,V, S86); *cohors III milliaria Tungrorum* (PME I,IV,V, C193); *cohors I milliaria Vindellicorum* (PME II,IV,V, P114). There is, however, one similar example where L. Maesius Rufus is described as *trib. coh. mil. Italic. volunt. quae est in Syria* (PME II,IV,V, M7). The unit is *cohors II Italica voluntariorum CR*, but it is not definite it was milliary because a *cohors voluntariorum* was normally commanded by a tribune.²⁴ Thus there is doubt whether *cohors I Aelia Dacorum* was milliary at the time Cornelianus was in command c. AD 150. It may be that a vexillation had been withdrawn; certainly the evidence would suggest one had been taken away by AD 158 when the diploma found at Ravenglass was issued. Whether it returned is not certain because there is no later evidence for the unit as *milliaria* in spite of commanders being tribunes.²⁵ While such a situation lacks a direct parallel it has still not been satisfactorily explained why *cohortes I–II Tungrorum milliaria* always had prefects in charge.

In spite of the large number of records of this unit it is nowhere attested as *equitata*.

5) Cohors Aelia expedita milliaria

This cohort of light troops is solely recorded with its epithet on the career inscription of P. Aelius Marcianus set up in Caesarea in Mauretania Caesariensis (ILS 2738 = PME I,IV,V, A44). The text reads:

*P. Aelio P. fil. Palatīna Marciano / praef. coh. I Augustae / Bracarum /
praeposito n. Illyricorum / trib. coh. Ael. expeditae / praef. al. Aug. II Thracum /
praeposito al. gemin. / Seba[sten.] / praeposito classis / Syriacae et Augustae /
praef. classis Moesiaticae / C. Caesius Marcellus / veter. ex dec. / al. II Thracum*

His career has been dated to the years following the death of Hadrian.²⁶

Recently a later date has been suggested for his career. It has been pointed out that the nomen and filiation of Marcianus coupled with the tribe Palatina would suggest that he was the son or the grandson of a freedman.²⁷ Thus the post of *praepositus* of the fleets of Syria and Egypt at Caesarea in Mauretania Caesariensis would belong to the reign of Marcus when the Moors invaded Baetica.²⁸ This later dating is also supported by his post of *praeposito n. Illyricorum*. This unit was converted into an ala at some time after AD 140 (RMD I 39) and before the third century when it is recorded as such on two tombstones (AE 1992, 1472; VI 3234). The former honours Aurelius Valens and the latter an *eques singularis Augusti* adlected from the ala.²⁹ A third tombstone from Apulum in Dacia records Aelius Dubitatus who is described as *missicio alae Bat ex a n Ilyr* (AE 1987, 829). As a *missicius* he would have been discharged before being eligible for the award of citizenship after twenty five years service

²⁴ P. A. Holder, *op. cit.* (note 1) 64–66.

²⁵ A similar conclusion has been reached without knowledge of the diploma for Britain of AD 158 by T. Wilmott. (T. Wilmott, Birdoswald, excavations of a Roman fort on Hadrian's Wall and its successor settlement: 1987–92, London 1997, 195–196.)

²⁶ H. G. Pflaum, *op. cit.*, n. 125. Pflaum adduced the following reasons for this: the honorific title Aelia borne by the *cohors expedita*; the *numerus Illyricorum* was transformed into an ala in the reign of Antoninus Pius; and Marcianus was recorded at York in Britain as prefect of *cohors I Augusta Bracarum* (RIB 619) which would belong to the advance into Scotland in the reign of Antoninus Pius before the cohort was transferred to Lower Moesia. However, the latter inscription does not name the cohort and cannot be closely dated (PME I,IV, A43.)

²⁷ M. Reddé, *Mare nostrum. Les infrastructures, le disposition et l'histoire de la marine militaire sous l'empire romain*, Paris 1986, 564–565.

²⁸ M. Reddé, *ibid.*, 565.

²⁹ M. P. Speidel, *Die Denkmäler der Kaiserreiter, Equites singulares Augusti*, Köln 1994, n. 541 provides the dating evidence for this.

and thus would have been a citizen before recruitment. His death should therefore date to the latter part of the second century. It may be that the creation of the ala from the *numerus* had just taken place and thus the unit name should be restored as *a(la) n(ova) Ilyr(icorum)*.³⁰

The only other possible evidence for this cohort is a fragmentary altar from Albulae in Mauretania Caesariensis (VIII 21666) which reads:

] coh exp ex vi/[su...] aram libens / [...]avit cordub

There are other inscriptions from here which record troops from Lower Germany (VIII 9798, ILS 9187, ILS 9187a). These have been dated to the Moorish revolt during the reign of Antoninus Pius.³¹ It is therefore possible that after the revolt a cohort was formed from the troops at Albulae among whom were other *exploratores*. This might explain the name *expedita*.

While there is no specific evidence for the unit to be *milliaria* because it was commanded by a tribune as a *militia secunda* this usually means that it was milliary. There is no evidence that it was *equitata*.

6) Cohors I Aelia gaesatorum milliaria

This cohort of spearmen would have been raised from Raetia and perhaps Gaul where they were famous for the use of the *gaesum*, a heavy iron throwing spear. It is first attested on the diploma for Pannonia Superior of 1st July AD 126 as *cohors I Aeliae gesator(um) (milliaria)*.³² This shows that it had men eligible for discharge who had been recruited c. AD 101. Thus the cohort could have been raised early in Hadrian's reign, hence the honorific title, and those men discharged in AD 126 were part of the cadre around which the unit was formed. Alternatively it could mean it was raised by Trajan about AD 101, the award by Hadrian would then have been a battle honour gained in the trouble on the Lower Danube at the beginning of the latter's reign. It is also possible that, in origin, it was a *numerus gaesatorum* raised for Trajan's Dacian Wars which was converted to a cohort by Hadrian. (This question will be investigated more fully below.)

By AD 133 the cohort had moved to Dacia Porolissensis (RMD I 35) where it is normally attested. On the diplomas of AD 164 for Dacia Porolissensis the unit is not denoted as milliary (XVI 185, RMD I 64, RMD I 63 restored), while the relevant entry on that of AD 161/162 (RMD III 177) is missing. This might suggest that a vexillation had been withdrawn temporarily. The recently published diploma of AD 160/161 for Pannonia Superior (RMD III 176) provides an answer as a *cohors [I Ael] gaesat [...]* is listed as the first cohort. This vexillation may have been to replace *cohors I Aelia sagittariorum milliaria* (see below.) The last known records are the diplomas of AD 164 (XVI 185, RMD I 64).

There is no evidence for the cohort to have been *equitata*.

7) Cohors I Aelia Hispanorum milliaria equitata

This cohort is first recorded on the diploma of AD 178 for Britain (RMD III 184) as *cohors I Aelia Hispanor(um)*. The earlier history of the unit is not at all clear. The most recent reconstruction of its origin has suggested it was one of two cohorts of Spaniards in Britain in the reign of Trajan.³³ One of which is recorded on the diplomas for AD 122, 124, 126, 145/6 (XVI 69, RIB2401.6, J. Nollé, *op. cit.*,

³⁰ Compare M. P. Speidel, A Latin gravestone of AD 390 from Sebaste/Phrygia, *Roman Army Studies* Vol. 1, Amsterdam 1984, 384–386.

³¹ M. P. Speidel, *Exploratores. Mobile elite units of Roman Germany*, *Epigr. Stud.* 13, 1983, 66 = *Roman Army Studies* Vol. 2, Stuttgart 1992, 92.

³² W. Eck & M. M. Roxan, Two new military diplomas. In R. Frei-Stolba und M. A. Speidel (ed.), *Römische Inschriften – Neufunde, Neulesungen und Neuinterpretationen: Festschrift für Hans Lieb*, Basel 1995, 55–99.

³³ M. G. Jarrett, *op. cit.*, 46–48. It should be noted that it is now known that the other *cohors I Hispanorum* is not recorded on the diploma for AD 178. (Information from M. M. Roxan.)

(n. 14), RIB2401.10). By the beginning of the reign of Hadrian one of the cohorts had been made milliary and was stationed at Maryport in Cumbria when this fort was built. Later, in Hadrian's reign, a vexillation was withdrawn to fight in the Jewish War and then returned. In the advance into Scotland, Antoninus Pius rewarded this cohort with the honorific title Aelia.

It has also been suggested that the *cohors [H]ispanorum tironum* commanded by an unknown equestrian from Carales in Sardinia (PME II,IV, Inc. 188) is the earliest manifestation of the cohort.³⁴ A full discussion of his career in the light of recent discoveries might prove useful in disentangling the origin of this cohort. The acephalous inscription reads (AE 1972, 226 = PME II,IV, Inc. 188):

... al]ae Gallor/[um Petrianae ci]vium R. miliariae trib. /
[cohortis I H]ispanorum tironum / [praef. coh. I L]atobicorum equitatae /
[praef. coh.]II Breucorum peditatae / [omnibus ho]noribus in patria functo /
[.] Aureli / [...]nus Victor Montanus / [...]icola Silvanus / [...]untia Saturnina /
[lib. A]ug. Antonini Pii

The ala is clearly the *ala Gallorum Petriana milliaria CR* of Britain commanded as a *militia tertia*. This suggests a date prior to the introduction by Hadrian of the *quarta militia* for the command of an *ala milliaria*. *Cohors I Latobicorum equitata* was part of the garrison of Lower Germany in the reign of Hadrian where it is attested as *cohors I Latobic(orum) et Varcian(orum)* on a diploma of AD 127.³⁵ The cohort of Breuci could be the second, third or fourth (there is room for further uprights in the numeral) and none of these are known to have been *equitata*. *Cohors III Breucorum* is recorded on the same diploma for Lower Germany as the previous unit and so could be the cohort in question. The equestrian's *militia secunda* is the tribunate of a cohort of Spanish recruits. In the second century there were few opportunities or reasons to raise a cohort of Spaniards.

The career pattern therefore would fit into the reign of Hadrian, but the people who set up the inscription were imperial *liberti* with the *nomen* Aurelius which suggests a much later date. But it should not be overlooked that if they had been manumitted by Antoninus Pius before he became Emperor they would have become T Aurelii.³⁶

Thus it is possible that the unit recorded on this inscription is that which came to be known as *cohors I Aelia Hispanorum milliaria*. Whether the latter is the same as the *cohors I Hispanorum* at Maryport is not certain. On none of the many altars and the one building stone found there is the unit attested as milliary. This is not necessarily proof it was not so, but it should be remembered that there was another cohort of Spaniards in Britain at this time which was quingenary (above). It may be that the unit at Maryport is this cohort although the altars reveal two tribunes and four prefects as commanders.

The two tribunes, M. Maenius Agrippa and C. Caballius Priscus are each attested on four altars.³⁷ Fortunately a career inscription from Camerinum for Agrippa has survived (XI 5632, ILS 2735 = PME II,IV,V, M5) and reads:

M. Maenio C. f. Cor. Agrippae L. Tusidio Campestri /
hospiti divi Hadriani patri / senatoris praef. coh. II Fl. /
Britton. equitat. electo / a divo Hadriano et misso /

³⁴ E. Birley communicated this idea to a number of scholars. R. W. Davies, *Cohors I Hispanorum and the garrisons of Maryport*, CW² 77, 1977, 12–13 accepted the identification; H. Devijver, PME II, Inc. 188, did not; M. G. Jarrett, *op. cit.*, 48 rejected the identification.

³⁵ W. Eck & E. Paunov, *Ein neues Militärdiplom für die Auxiliartruppen von Germania inferior aus dem Jahr 127*, Chiron 27, 1997, 335–354.

³⁶ Known examples are VI 5; VI 8440; VI 13219; VI 13331; XIV 250; XIV 2104; AE 1953, 64.

³⁷ Agrippa (RIB 823–826); Priscus (RIB 817–820).

*in expeditionem Brittan/nicam trib. coh. I Hispanor. /
equitat. praef. alae I Gallor. / et Pannonior. catafractatae
proc. Aug. praef. classis / Britannicae proc. provin/ciae
Britanniae equo pul/blico patrono municipi / vicani Censorglacenses /
consecuti ab indulgentia / optimi maximique imp. Anto/nini Aug. Pii
beneficio inter/pretationis eius privilegia / quibus in p[e]rpetuum
aucti / confirmatique sunt / l.d.d.d.*

This shows that his command of *cohors I Hispanorum* was a *militia secunda* as part of his *tres militiae*. But, perhaps more importantly, Agrippa is named as a friend of Hadrian and is said to have been selected by the emperor for the British Expedition. Then he was appointed as tribune. Surely, if no milliary cohort command had been vacant then a suitable quingenary cohort command would have been found.³⁸ It may or may not be significant that the cohorts commanded by Agrippa specify they were *equitata* and that the ala is called *catafractata*, but there is no mention of the cohort of Spaniards being milliary. If Agrippa's appointment as tribune came about in this way then the appointment of C. Caballius Priscus as tribune of *cohors I Hispanorum* may have been made in similar fashion given the importance of patronage in the selection of equestrian officers for military commands.

Whatever the early history of the cohort, in the third century it is attested at Netherby, one of the outpost forts of Hadrian's Wall. The earliest dated inscription is one of AD 213 (RIB 976). The last are two inscriptions of AD 222 (RIB 968, 978); on both of which the cohort is recorded as *milliaria* and *equitata*.

8) Cohors I Aelia sagittariorum milliaria equitata

This part-mounted cohort of archers is first attested on a diploma of AD 133 for Pannonia Superior as *cohors I Ael. Caes. (milliaria) sag.* (XVI 76).³⁹ As men were eligible for discharge in this year they would have been recruited c. AD 108. This implies an existence for the unit before the reign of Hadrian perhaps as a cohort raised by Trajan. The award of Aelia would then have been a battle honour gained on the Lower Danube early in Hadrian's reign. Alternatively it may have been raised by Hadrian, hence the honorific title. Thus those who were discharged in AD 133 would have been part of the cadre around which it was formed. Thirdly, in origin, it could have been a numerus raised by Trajan or a vexillation of archers put together for Trajan's Parthian War. In either case it would have been Hadrian who regularised the unit as a cohort. (This question will be looked at in more detail below.)

The name *Caes.* which is only known from the more complete diploma of AD 133 (XVI 76) might indicate the origin of the unit. The name might refer to a vexillation drawn from the auxiliary troops in Mauretania Caesariensis.⁴⁰ Or it might show the unit was raised in one of the cities in the East called Caesarea.⁴¹ It has also been suggested that *Caes.* may be a mistake and may not belong as a title to this cohort at all. Rather there was a mix up of names in the diploma of AD 133 since *cohors I Aelia gaesatorum milliaria* is now known to have been in Pannonia Superior in AD 126 before being transferred to Dacia Porolissensis.⁴²

³⁸ The most recent discussion of this type of command is by F. Berard, *Un nouveau procureur à Aime en Tarentaise, Savoie, Gallia* 52, 1995, 349–351.

³⁹ It is restored on the other diploma for that year (XVI 77).

⁴⁰ D. Kennedy, *The auxilia and numeri raised in the Roman province of Syria*. Unpublished D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford 1980, 247.

⁴¹ W. Wagner, *Die Dislokation der römischen Auxiliar-Formationen in den Provinzen Noricum, Pannonien, Moesien und Dakien von Augustus bis Gallienus*, Berlin 1938, 183.

⁴² M. M. Roxan, *RMD* III p. 300, note 4.

The cohort was based in Pannonia Superior and is next recorded on the diplomas of AD 148 (XVI 96) and AD 149 (XVI 97). However, it is not named on that for AD 154 (XVI 104) nor is it named on the surviving parts of the diplomas of AD 160/1 (RMD III 176) and of AD 163 (RMD I 62). With the appearance of *cohors I Aelia gaesatorum* on the former it may be that *cohors I Aelia sagittariorum milliaria* had temporarily left the province to participate in the Parthian War of Lucius Verus. At Klosterneuberg in Austria an altar recording the cohort has been discovered which was set up in AD 159 (AE 1977, 616). This shows it was still in Pannonia Superior then.

The fort at Klosterneuberg was where it was the garrison and inscriptions found there show it was usually called *cohors I Aelia sagittariorum*. Three also reveal that it was *equitata* (AE 1992, 1441, 1447, 1450). The last record of the cohort dates to AD 230 (III 5647).

9) Cohors I Aelia singularium

A tombstone found at Auzia in Mauretania Caesariensis records the full name of the unit (VIII 20753):

[...] / [...] / .. va.s ex / coh. I Ael. sing. / v. a. XXXX
Simillis sig. heres / posuit ob m.

Usually it is styled *cohors singularium* on other tombstones found there (VIII 9054, 9055, 9058). The origin of the cohort lies with the *pedites singulares Pannoniciani* recorded at Aquae Calidae in the same province (VIII 21453). They were sent as reinforcements to help put down the revolt in Mauretania during the reign of Antoninus Pius.⁴³ After the quelling of the revolt the unit was reformed as a cohort which is confirmed by a tombstone from Auzia which records men with Illyrian names as members of the cohort (VIII 9054). The last known record is from Auzia and dates to AD 260 (VIII 9047).

This survey of the origins of these cohorts reveals patterns in relation to strength, function and naming. Of the nine cohorts four are known to have been milliary and two more, *cohors I Aelia Brittonum* and *cohors Aelia expedita*, can be assumed to have been so because they were commanded by tribunes as a *militia secunda*. This reflects the realisation that larger auxiliary units could be more effective.

By comparison with cohorts raised by Trajan it might also have been expected that most of these cohorts would be part-mounted. Certainly if the milliary ones had been *equitata* then each would have been able to field 240 cavalry. In the present state of knowledge only *cohors I Aelia Brittonum milliaria*, *cohors I Aelia Hispanorum milliaria*, *cohors I Aelia sagittariorum milliaria* and *cohors I Aelia classica* are known to have been part-mounted. In the latter instance a cavalry detachment seems to have been added to a cohort of marines most likely to fit in with the perceived need for such cohorts in Britain. By this time recruits were being trained to serve as cavalry so the idea of adding a contingent to an infantry unit would have been feasible. Two cohorts were specialists weapons units, one in the use of archery the other in the use of the *gaesum*, a heavy throwing spear.

As far as can be ascertained two cohorts received their honorific name from Antoninus Pius. *Cohors I Aelia singularium* was a recasting of the *pedites singulares Pannoniciani* sent to Mauretania Caesariensis to quell the Moorish revolt in his reign. On current evidence it would seem that *cohors Aelia expedita* had a similar origin. Seven, on present evidence, are most likely to have been honoured by Hadrian. *Cohors I Aelia classica* might have been formed from a vexillation of the British Fleet while *cohors I Aelia Athoitorum*, in origin, was perhaps part of the militia in Thrace. From diploma evidence it is evident that three cohorts had an existence prior to Hadrian's reign in some form. These are *cohors I Aelia Dacorum milliaria*; *cohors I Aelia gaesatorum milliaria*; and *cohors I Aelia sagittariorum milliaria*. If all of these had been raised by Trajan it is very strange that he did not give

⁴³ M. P. Speidel, *Guards of the Roman armies: an essay on the singulares of the provinces*, Bonn 1978, 64–65.

them the honorific title Ulpia as he did with so many others either on their creation or as a battle honour.⁴⁴ Therefore the best explanation would be that these were originally irregular or temporary units recast as cohorts by Hadrian. The last named unit is most likely to have been a vexillation of eastern archers brought together for a particular war. But it may just be a coincidence that the first two of these cohorts are paralleled among the *nationes* listed in the *De munitionibus castrorum* (Ch. 30). There are 900 'getati' and 700 Daci listed. The former is usually emended to read *gaesati*.⁴⁵ At the least there is a reflection of the areas from which the Roman army was drawing recruits at this time. Therefore *cohors I Aelia Brittonum milliaria* may well have had a similar origin as there are 500 Brittones also listed among the *nationes*. Conversely it is not surprising that *cohors I Aelia Hispanorum milliaria* is the last known with that name because of the general civilised condition of Spain. Future recruits would come from more warlike tribes such as the Cantabri named among the *nationes* of the *De munitionibus castrorum* (Ch. 30).

The distribution of these units around the frontier provinces of the Empire reflects perceived needs. The two cohorts in Mauretania Caesariensis were there as a result of the Moorish revolt in the reign of Antoninus Pius. Hadrian, as part of his reorganisation of the province of Britain introduced three new cohorts to the army there, but he also withdrew units. For example *ala I Pannoniorum Tampiana* is attested in Britain in AD 122 (XVI 69) but it was in Noricum by AD 128/38 (XVI 174). *Ala I Gallorum et Thracum Classiana* and *ala I Thracum* are attested in Germania Inferior in AD 127 (W. Eck & E. Paunov, *op. cit.*, (n. 32), but the former was in Britain in AD 122 (XVI 69) and the latter is attested there in AD 124 (RIB 2401.6). *Cohors I Aelia Dacorum milliaria* and *cohors I Aelia Hispanorum milliaria* most likely arrived with him while *cohors I Aelia classica* was formed from a vexillation as a result of his stay. He had just carried out a major reorganisation of the Danubian armies so it is no surprise that he added new cohorts there. *Cohors I Aelia gaesatorum milliaria* was stationed first in Pannonia Superior before moving to Dacia Porolissensis and becoming part of its permanent garrison. *Cohors I Aelia sagittariorum milliaria* was based at Klosterneuberg, the furthest fort up the Danube in Upper Pannonia. *Cohors I Aelia Brittonum milliaria* was based in Noricum, the next province upstream. Finally there is *cohors I Aelia Athoitorum* which was stationed in Thrace behind the Lower Danube. Its role may have been primarily concerned with internal security, but it would also have acted as a reserve force if required.

⁴⁴ P. A. Holder, *op. cit.*, (note 1) 18.

⁴⁵ A Trajanic date is possible for the treatise although its content is now argued as largely theoretical. See C. M. Gilliver, *The De munitionibus castrorum: text and translation, JRMES* Vol. 4, 1993, 33–34.