



BANNA

Hadrian's Wall Fort and Settlement

Birdoswald, Cumbria

NGRef: NY615663

OSMap: Hadrian's Wall, OL43, LR87.

Type: Wall Fort, Fort, Minor Settlement

Roads

Hadrian's Wall: E (4.25) to **Banks East**

Maiden Way: NNW (6.5) to **Bewcastle** (Bewcastle, Cumbria)

Wall: E (3.25) to **Magnis Carvetiorvm** (Carvoran, Northumberland)

Wall: W (7.5) to **Camboglanna** (Castlesteads, Cumbria)

Hadrian's Wall: E (5) to **Leahill**

Maiden Way: NNW (4) to **Robin Hoods Bvttts**

Banna - The Peak

The name of the Birdoswald fort has been in dispute for some considerable time, the argument being compounded by discrepancies in the Roman maps of the period. The name of this fort was either *Banna* or *Camboglanna*, depending on which *itinerary* you used. The name now favoured by Roman historians is *Banna*, a word (Welsh/Gaelic) meaning peak or horn, related to the Old Welsh word *ban* and the Old Irish word *benn*. This topic is discussed further on the RBO page for [Castlesteads](#).

The Epigraphy of *Banna*

There are sixty-two inscribed stones recorded in the RIB for Birdoswald, comprising: forty-four altars and other votive stones, ten building inscriptions, cohort and centurial stones, four tombstones and four other indesignated texts. These include fifteen inscriptions all dateable to the third century.

The Dateable Latin Inscriptions from Birdoswald

RIB # (clickable)	Date	Description
1910	198-209AD	B.I. of emperor Septimius Severus and his son Caracalla
1909	205-208AD	B.I. of emperor Septimius Severus and his sons Caracalla and Geta by <i>Cohors I Aelia Dacorum</i> and <i>Cohors I Thracum</i>
1911	212-217AD	altar to emperor Caracalla
1892	212-222AD?	altar to I O M by <i>Cohors I Aelia Dacorum Antoniniana</i>
1914	c.219AD	B.I. of governor Modius Julius by <i>Cohors I Aelia Dacorum</i>
1896	235-238AD	altar to I O M D by <i>Cohors I Aelia Dacorum</i> during Maximian's reign
1929a	235-238AD	altar to I O M D by <i>Cohors I Aelia Dacorum</i> during Maximian's reign
1922	236AD	damaged B.I. erected during the consulship of Maximinus and Africanus
1875	237AD	altar to I O M by <i>Cohors I Aelia Dacorum</i> during the consulship of Perpetuus
1893	238-244AD	altar to I O M by <i>Cohors I Aelia Dacorum Gordiana</i>
1883	260-268AD	altar to I O M by <i>Cohors I Aelia Dacorum Postumiana</i>
1886	260-268AD	altar to I O M by <i>Cohors I Aelia Dacorum Postumiana</i>

1885 271-274AD

altar to Cocidius and I O M by Cohors I Aelia Dacorum Tetricianorum

1929b 276-282AD

altar to I O M by Cohors I Aelia Dacorum Probiana

1912 293-305AD

B.I. of emperors Diocletian and Maximian

Among the dateable inscriptions from Birdoswalds is the heavily damaged stone *RIB* 1922, which reads ...CM... ...IMVS DI... ...ES A SOLO FEC... MAXIMINO ET AFRICANO COS, and was evidently erected during the consulship of Emperor Caesar Gaius Julius Verus **Maximinus** Augustus and Marcus Pupienius **Africanus**, who were *consules ordinarii* for the year 236AD, *a.u.c.*989.

Numismatic Evidence from Birdoswald

Of the 58 coins recovered from Birdoswald, the majority (51) were recorded during excavations in 1929, the rest (7) are casual finds recorded either in 1860, 1931 or 1934. The coins range from 5 coppers of Trajan (inc. R.I.C. 489) to 3 copper coins dating post-375. The most notable are; 6 of Antoninus Pius (inc. a single R.I.C. 417 silver issue), 3 coppers of Constantian and 3 of Constantius II also 3 *Fel Temp Reparatio* . Other coins were recovered during excavations 1987-1990 but details are not known.

The Fort(s) at Birdoswald

In 1928 it was found that the *Vallum* which curves round the southern side of the Birdoswald fort has a circuit which suggests that it was so shaped as to avoid a fort placed on the Wall which was considerably smaller than the later fort whose outline can nowadays be seen. This probably means that the fort was expanded in size sometime after the *Vallum* was built, during the construction of which, the *Vallum* appears to have been back-filled. This seems to have occurred very soon after the *Vallum* was originally completed.

Centurial Stone from the Birdoswald Fort

> CONGAONI CANDIDI P XXX

The century of Congaonius Candidus [has built] thirty feet [of rampart].

(*RIB* 1917)

Although the dimensions of the original cavalry fort at Birdoswald is unknown, the later infantry fort measures some 580 by 400 feet and covered an area of almost 5½ acres. The fort was placed on a prominent ridge looking across the Irthing Gorge towards the **Stanegate** in the south, and across the Midgeholme Moss to *Fanum Cocidi* (Bewcastle) in the north. The garrison was placed here to protect the Roman bridge across the River Irthing which lay only half a mile (0.8km) to the east.

Building Inscription of Severus and Caracalla

IMPP CAES L SEPTIMIO SEVERO PIO PERTINACI ET M AVREL ANTONIN PIO AVG

For the emperors, Caesar Lucius Septimius Severus Pius Pertinax [Augustus] and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Pius Augustus.¹

(*RIB* 1910; dated: 198-209AD)

1. The emperor Septimius Severus and his eldest son Caracalla. Severus came to power in April 193AD and Caracalla joined him in power in January 198, whereupon he took the rank Augustus and later that year the title *Pius*. Both emperors adopted the victory title *Britannicus Maximus* in 209, which would surely have been included on a stone erected within the subject province. On this basis the stone is dated between 198AD and 209.

Altarstone Dedicated to the Emperor Caracalla

PRO SALVTE D N MAXIMI AC FORT IMP CAES M AVREL ANTON P F AVG ..OC ...V...VST ...O AEDIF

For the health of our lord ?maximi ac fort? Imperator Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Pius Felix Augustus¹ [...]² erected this altarstone.

(*RIB* 1911; altarstone; dated: 212-217AD)

1. The emperor Caracalla became joint emperor with his younger brother Geta following the death of their father Septimius Severus at *Eburacum* in north-east England on 4th February 211AD. Geta is not mentioned on this stone so it must have been erected after his murder in December 211, and obviously before

the murder of the fratricidal older brother Caracalla in April 217.

2. The bottom of this stone is heavily damaged, and no attempt has been made to expand or translate this text.

The first fort in this area was built astride the turf wall and was itself of turf-and-timber construction, intended to house a force of 500 cavalry. By the time the Wall in this area was replaced in stone, the garrison had been changed to a cohort of infantry, and in consequence the Wall was realigned to incorporate the northern defences of the fort, to conform to the usual plan for an infantry fort on the Wall. This divergence from the original line has meant that a section of the original turf wall has been preserved for about 1½ miles (2km) to the west of Birdoswald.

Record of the Reconstruction of the *Praetorium*, *Principia* and *Balneum*

DD NN DIOCLETIANO ET MAXIMIANO INVICTIS AVGG ET CONSTANTIO ET MAXIMIANO N N C C SVB V P AVR ARPAGIO PR
PRAETOR QVOD ERAT HVMO COPERT ET IN LABE CONL ET PRINC ET BAL REST CVRANT FL MARTINO CENT P P C ...

For our Lords Diocletian and Maximian, the Invincible *Augusti*, and for Constantius and Maximianus, our most noble Caesars,¹ under his Perfection Aurelius Arpagio the governor,² the commandant's house which was covered in earth and in a ruinous state, also the Headquarters Building and the Bath House,³ were restored under the direction of Flavius Martinus, centurion in command of the Cohort[...]

(RIB 1912; restored inscription; dated: 297-305AD)

1. The emperors Diocletian and Maximian ruled jointly from April 286AD until Diocletian's abdication in May 305. Constantius I and Galerius were appointed to the rank of *Caesar* in March 293.
2. Based on the expansion *PR[aeses]*, governor. **Publius Aurelius Arpagio** is known only from this single inscription. He governed Britain between 297-305AD.
3. Collingwood prefers *ballistaria* catapult-platforms to *balneum* bath-house (*The Archaeology of Roman Britain*, p.25, fn.2).

A building inscription recovered from the interior of the fort in 1929 records restoration work undertaken at the turn of the fourth century by an unknown unit (*vide RIB 1912 supra*). This is a very important find because it provides conclusive evidence that the *praetorium* or commanding officer's house in an auxiliary fort was a separate and distinct entity from the *principia* or headquarters building.

The Legionary Builders of the Birdoswald Fort

LEG II VI VIC P F F

The Second Legion and the Sixth, Loyal and Faithful, have made [this].

(RIB 1916)

Legio Secundae Augusta - The Second Augustan Legion

I O M COH I AEL DACOR C C A IVL MARCELLINVS > LEG II AVG

For Jupiter Best and Greatest, the First Cohort of Aelian Dacians, under the supervision of Aulus Julius Marcellinus, centurion of the **Second Augustan Legion**.

(RIB 1880; altarstone)

The **Second Legion** is mentioned on only two stones from Birdoswalds, a building inscription shared with *Leg VI Victrix* (*vide RIB 1916 supra*), and on an altar to *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus* dedicated by *Coh I Aelia Dacorum* and a centurion of the Second (*vide RIB 1880 etiam supra*). It is probable that centurion Marcellinus was seconded to the Birdoswalds garrison in order to provide initial training or in some other advisory capacity, but the evidence of this altarstone to Jupiter, usually placed by the commander of the regiment, suggests the possibility that Marcellinus was placed in temporary command of the fort and its garrison unit *Cohors Primae Aelia Dacorum*.

Legio Sextae Victrix - The Sixth Victorious Legion

... V C... L VEREIVS FORTVNATVS > LEG VI ...

[...] Lucius Vereius Fortunatus, centurion of the **Sixth Legion** [...]

(RIB 1907; altarstone)

The **Sixth Legion** receives mention on three stones from Birdoswalds; on a damaged altarstone to an unknown god (*vide RIB 1907 supra*), on a building inscription shared with *Legio II Augusta* (*vide RIB 1916 etiam supra*), and finally, on the tombstone of a soldier (*vide RIB 1929c infra*).

Tombstone of a Soldier of the Sixth

D M S G COSSVTIVS SATVRNINVS HIP REG MIL LEG VI VIC P F

To the sacred shades of the departed Gaius Cossutius Saturninus, of *Hippo Regius*,¹ a soldier of the **Sixth Victorious Legion, Loyal and Faithful**.

(RIB 1929c; tombstone; *JRS* lii (1962), p.194, no.21)

1. *Hippo Regius* was a town on the north-west coast of the Roman province of Africa west of Carthage, close to the border with Numidia. The Roman town now lies in ruins near Annaba, a major city of Algeria near the border with Tunisia.

The Garrison Units of *Camboglanna*

The identity of the cavalry regiment which garrisoned the original turf fort is not known, and likewise, the infantry regiment who first occupied the replacement stone fort, although it has been suggested that the latter may have been a detachment of the **First Cohort of Tungrians**, a one-thousand strong mixed-unit of cavalry and infantry who are known from building inscriptions at *Camboglanna* (Castlesteads, Cumbria; *vide RIB 1981 et al.*). This unit is too large to be housed either at Birdoswalds or the nearby fort at Castlesteads, though it is possible that the unit was divided between these two forts during the Hadrianic period.

Cohors Primae Thracum - The First Cohort of Thracians

IMPP CAES L SEPT SEVERO PIO PERT ET M AVR ANTONINO AVG ET P SEPT GETAE NOB CAES HORREVM FECER COH I AEL DAC I TRACVM C R SVB ALFENO SENEZIONE COS PER AVREL IVLIANVM TR

For the emperors, Caesar Lucius Septimius Severus Pius Pertinax, and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus, and Publius Septimius Geta, noble Caesar,¹ This granary was made by the **First Aelian Cohort of Dacians** and the **First Cohort of Thracians**, Citizens of Rome,² under Alfenus Senecio,³ the consular [governor], through [the agency of] the tribune Aurelius Julianus.

(RIB 1909; dated: 205-208AD)

1. The emperor Septimius Severus and his sons Caracalla and Geta. The youngest son Geta was named *Caesar* in 205AD and became *Augustus* in 209.
2. The title CR *Civium Romanorum* would seem to indicate that the unit had been granted Roman citizenship for some unrecorded exploit sometime prior to the date of the Birdoswald inscription.
3. **Lucius Alfenus Senecio** was consular governor of Britain between 205/207AD and c.208/209.

The first positively dateable evidence recording the name of a Birdoswald garrison unit is a building inscription recovered from the interior of the fort (RIB 1909, dated: 205-208AD), which places *Cohors Primae Thracum Civium Romanorum* here at the beginning of the third century. This unit was a mixed regiment of infantry and cavalry recruited from amongst the war-like tribes of the Roman province of Thrace (modern Bulgaria). The building inscription is shared with the third-century garrison unit *Cohors I Aelia Dacorum* and perhaps indicated building repairs conducted immediately prior to the fort changing hands.

Venatores Banniensis - The Hunters of *Banna*

DEO SANCTO SILVANO VENATORES BANNISS

For the holy god *Silvanus*, the **Hunters of Banna** [dedicate this].

(RIB 1905; altarstone)

An altar to Silvanus the God of the Forest (RIB 1905 *supra*) uncovered at Birdoswald, was dedicated by a group calling

themselves the *Venatores Bannienses*, or the Hunters of *Banna*. These men may have been posted to the Birdoswald fort sometime during the fourth century from the neighbouring fort at Castlesteads in Cumbria. Some controversy still exists, however, and is discussed in the RBO page for *Camboglanna* (Castlesteads).

Cohors Primae Aelia Dacorum - The First Cohort of Aelian Daci

Dedicatory Inscription of Governor Modius Julianus



SVB MODIO IVLIO
 LEG[atus] AVG[usti] PR[o] •
 PR[ae]tor[is] COH[ors] I (primae) AEL[ia] D[a]C[orum]
 CVI PRAE[fectu] EST M[arco]
 CL[audio] MENANDER
 TRIB[unus]

Under Modius Julius,¹
 legate of the emperor with pro-praetorian power,
 the **First Aelian Cohort of Dacians** (built this),
 under the command of the tribune
 Marcus Claudius Menander.

(RIB 1914; dated: c.219AD)

1. Modius Julianus was governor of Britain c.219AD.

The third and fourth century garrison of Birdoswald was undoubtedly *Cohors I Aelia Dacorum Milliaria*, a one-thousand strong infantry regiment from Dacia, a Roman province on the north bank of the Lower Danube. Their presence is confirmed by epigraphic evidence recovered from the interior of the fort itself (*vide infra*).

Altar to the iron-age War God *Cocidius*

DEO COCIDIO COH I AELIA DACORVM C P TERENTIVS VALERIANVS TRIB VSLM

For the god *Cocidius*, the **First Cohort of Aelian Daci**, who are commanded by the tribune Terentius Valerianus, willingly and deservedly fulfil their vow.

(RIB 1872; altarstone)

Altar to *Signis et Numini Augusti*

SIGNIS ET N AVG COH I AEL DACORVM

For the Standards and the Divine Spirit of the Emperor, the **First Cohort of Aelian Dacians** [made this].

(RIB 1904; statue base)

Dedications by the Tribune Ammonius Victorinus

I O M COH I AEL DACORVM QVB PREEST AMMONIVS VICTORINVS TRIB ...TO... COH I DAC QVIB PRAEEST AMM VICTORIN
 TRIB

For Jupiter Best and Greatest, the **First Cohort of Aelian Dacians**,
 commanded by the tribune Ammonius Victorinus [made this].

(RIB 1874; altarstone)

[...] the **First Cohort of Aelian Daci**, who are commanded
 by the tribune Ammonius Victorinus.

(RIB 1906; base)

The unit with the most epigraphic evidence at the Birdoswalds fort is *Cohors Primae Aelia Dacorum*, which is attested on thirty-one inscribed stones out of a total of sixty-two which have been recovered to date. These texts may be broken down as follows; there are twenty-four altars dedicated to *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus* (RIB 1874-1894, 1896, 1929a/b), nine of which can

be dated to the third century, two building inscriptions (*RIB* 1909, dated: 205-208AD, shared with *Cohors I Thracum*; 1914, dated: c.219AD), a statue base dedicated to the Standards (*RIB*1904), an altar to *Cocidius* (*RIB*1872), another altar to an unknown god (*RIB*1906), a single centurial stone (*RIB*1918) and the tombstone of a soldier (*RIB*1921). This evidence all points to extended residence of the unit at the fort over several generations, with sons following in their father's footsteps serving as soldiers in the First Cohort of Dacians.

Centurial Stone of *Cohors Primae Dacorum*

> DECI SAX COH I DAC

The century of Decius Sax[us], of the **First Cohort of Dacians** [built this].

(*RIB* 1918)

Tombstone of a Former Soldier

...SPA SEPTIMO VIXIT ANN XXXX MIL XVIII COH I AELIA DACORVM H F C

[To the shades of the departed Hos]pes¹ Septimus, who lived for forty years and served for eighteen in the **First Cohort of Aelian Dacians**.
He lies here.

(*RIB* 1921; tombstone)

1. The restoration of this man's first (or middle) name is entirely conjectural.

The Birdoswald *Notitia Dignitatum* Entry

Tribunus cohortis primae Aeliae Dacorum, Amboglanna

The tribune of the **First Cohort of Aelian Daci** at *Amboglanna*

(*Notitia Dignitatum* xl.44; 4th/5th C.)

In this reference we see that *Cohors Primae Dacorum* is identified as the late-4th century garrison of *Camboglanna*, which returns us to the problem outlined at the start of this web-page. There are two solutions here; either the First Cohort of Dacians were moved to the fort at **Castlesteads**, for which we have no corroborative epigraphic evidence, or there has been a scribal error at sometime in antiquity, perhaps made when making a copy of an earlier master document.

The Martial Gods of Roman Birdoswalds

The forty-four altars and other votive stones are mainly dedicated to the martial gods: there are twenty-four dedications to *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus* the chief deity of the Roman pantheon (*I O M*; *RIB* 1874-1896 inclusive, and 1929a/b), many of which are dateable and are discussed below, four more altars are devoted to the Roman war god *Mars* (altarstones *RIB* 1898-1900; undated stone 1901) and another two to the Germanic war god *Cocidius* (*RIB* 1872; 1885, shared with *I O M*, dated: 270-273AD). There is also a very interesting statue base dedicated to *Signis* or The Standards (*RIB* 1904 *supra*), which proves that the Roman soldiers actually worshipped their military colours.

Altarstones Dedicated to the War God Mars

DEO MART CHORTIS PRI AEL DAC V P V CVI TRIB

To the god **Mars**, the First Cohort of Aelian *Daci* have placed this votive offering with their tribune.

(*RIB* 1898; altarstone)

DEO MARTI AVG ...

To the god **Mars Augustus** [...]

(*RIB* 1900; altarstone)

MARTI PATRI

DEO MARTI ET VICTOR IAE AVREL MAXIMVS S S S VSLM

To **Mars** the
Father.

(*RIB* 1901)

To the god **Mars** and to **Victory**, Aurelius Maximus, took up this sacred undertaking himself,¹ willingly and
deservedly fulfilling a vow.

(*RIB* 1899; altarstone)

Iupiter Optimus Maximus

The long-standing garrison unit of Birdoswalds, *Cohors Primae Aelia Dacorum*, seemingly had the regimental tradition of dedicating a new altar to the god Jupiter Best and Greatest every time a new commander was appointed. The unit also declared itself loyal to the emperor of the time by adopting the emperor's name as a regimental title. A by-product of this is that many of the Birdoswald Jupiter altarstones may be dated.

The Dateable Jupiter Altarstones

I O M COH I AEL DACORVM C P AVRELIVS FASTVS TRIB PERPETVO COS

For Jupiter Best and Greatest, the *First Cohort of Aelian Dacians* commanded by the tribune Aurelius Fastus, when Perpetuus was consul.¹

(RIB 1875; altarstone; dated: 237AD)

1. Lucius Marius **Perpetuus** was ordinary consul for the year 237AD (*a.u.c.*990), with Lucius Mummius Felix Cornelianus his junior colleague.

I O M COH I AEL DAC POSTVMIANAC P MARC GALLICVS TRIB

For Jupiter Best and Greatest, the *First Cohort of Aelian Dacians*, **Postumus Own**¹ commanded by the tribune Marcus Gallicus.

(RIB 1883; altarstone; dated: 260-268AD)

1. Emperor Caesar Marcus Cassianus Latinius **Postumus** Pius Felix Invictus Augustus, was the rebel Roman general who formed the breakaway Gallic Empire in Autumn 260AD, which he ruled until his murder in February 269.

DEO COCIDIO • I O M COH I AEL DAC TETRICIANORVM C P POMPONIVS DESIDERATVS ... TRIB

To the god Cocidius [and] to Jupiter Best and Greatest, the *First Cohort of Aelian Dacians*, **Tetricius Own**¹ commanded by the tribune Pomponius Desideratus [...]

(RIB 1885; altarstone; dated: 271-274AD)

1. Emperor Caesar Gaius Pius Esuvius **Tetricus** Felix Invictus Augustus, was another ruler of the Gallic Empire who came to power in Spring 271AD and appointed his like-named son *Caesar* in Summer 273. They were both killed in battle against the true-emperor Aurelian in Spring 274.

I O M COH I AEL DACORVM POSTVMIANA C P PROB AVGENDVS TRIB

For Jupiter Best and Greatest, the *First Cohort of Aelian Dacians*, **Postumus Own**¹ commanded by the tribune Prob[us?] Augendus.

(RIB 1886; altarstone; dated: 260-268AD)

1. The Gallic emperor Postumus. See RIB 1883 above.

I O M COH I AELIA DAC ANTO

For Jupiter Best and Greatest, the *First Cohort of Aelian Dacians*, **Antoninus Own**¹

(RIB 1892; altarstone; dated: 212-217AD or 218-222)

1. Antoninus is a common short version of the name of both emperor Caracalla, whose sole rule began in December 212AD and lasted until his death in April 217, also his successor Elagabalus, who ruled from May 218 until March 222.

I O M COH I AEL DAC GORDIANA C PEST ...

For Jupiter Best and Greatest, the *First Cohort of Aelian Dacians*, **Gordian s Own**¹ who are commanded by [...]

(RIB 1893; altarstone; dated: 238-244AD)

1. The short-lived Gordian dynasty lasted from the accession of Gordian I in January 238AD until the murder of Gordian III in February 244.

I O M D COH I AEL DAC C P FLAVIVS MAXIMIA TRIB EX EVOC C I PR MAXIMIN

For Jupiter Best and Greatest of Doliche, the *First Cohort of Aelian Dacians*, commanded by the tribune Flavius Maximianus, upon his recall to service¹ by the request of the invincible *Princeps* Maximinus.²

(RIB 1896; altarstone; dated: 235-238AD)

I O M D COH I AEL DAC C P FLAVIVS MAXIMIANVS TRIB EX EVOC C I PR MAXIMIN

For Jupiter Best and Greatest of Doliche, the *First Cohort of Aelian Dacians*, commanded by the tribune Flavius Maximianus, upon his recall to service¹ by the request of the invincible *Princeps* Maximinus.²

(RIB 1929a; altarstone; dated: 235-238AD; JRS xlvii (1957), p.229, no.17)

1. The *evocati* were former veteran soldiers who were recalled to service (from Latin *evoco* to call-out, summon). Alternately, Maximianus may have been a former recruitment officer, an *evocator*. The reason for his recall was evidently his loyalty to the emperor, of whom he may have been a client or former freedman, hence the name *Maximianus* of Maximinus.
2. Emperor Caesar Gaius Iulius Verus **Maximinus** Pius Felix Invictus Augustus, nicknamed Thrax (the Thracian), ruled the Roman empire from February/March 235AD until his murder by his own troops at Aquileia in April 238.

I O M COH I AEL DACORVM PROBIANA C P AVR VERINVS TRIB

For Jupiter Best and Greatest, the *First Cohort of Aelian Dacians*, **Probus Own**,¹ commanded by the tribune Aurelius Verinus.

(RIB 1929b; altarstone; dated: 276-282AD; JRS li (1961), 194, no. 12)

1. Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius **Probus** Pius Felix Invictus Augustus, was emperor from July 276AD until he was murdered by his own soldiers near Sirmium in September 282.

Other Deities Attested at *Camboglanna*



Statue of Fortuna recovered from the Birdoswald *praetorium*. The original measures 37 x 17 (c.1 x 0.5 metres).

Altar to Fortune

DEAE FORTVNAE

For the goddess *Fortuna*.

(RIB 1873; altarstone)

Aside from the military gods discussed above, there are single altarstones dedicated to a range of household deities; to the goddess *Fortuna* (1873), the goddess *Latis* (1897), the Mother Goddesses (1902), the rural god *Silvanus* (1905), the sea god *Neptune* (1929d), to the otherwise unknown god *Daeratis* (1903), also to the emperor's Health (1911). There are, in addition, six more votive stones which cannot be assigned either because the dedication is damaged (1906-8, 1923) or there was no inscription recorded (1928/9).

Altar to the God Neptune

To the god **Neptune**, Reginius Justinus the tribune willingly and deservedly fulfilled a vow.

(RIB 1929d; altarstone; *Britannia* v (1974), pp.462-3, no.9)

Altar to the Germanic? Goddess *Latis*

DIE LATI

For the goddess **Latis**.

(RIB 1897; altarstone)

Altar to the Mother Goddesses

MATRIBVS PRNV... VVSCO VSLM

To the **Mothers**, Prunus? [...] for Vuscus, a vow fulfilled willingly and deservedly.

(RIB 1902; altarstone)

Altar Dedicated to the Goddess *Ratis*

DAERATI VOTVM IN PERPETVO

To the Goddess *Ratis*,¹ a permanent offering.

(RIB 1903; altarstone)

1. It is possible that this is the patron goddess of the City of Leicester, which in Roman times was known as *Ratae*. If so, it would be reasonable to assume that this altarstone was placed here by someone from that city, although the connection that the dedicator had with the Birdoswald fort remains unknown.

The *Vicus* or Civil Settlement

A large civil settlement has long been known to exist in the area to the immediate south-west of the fort. The burial ground at Birdoswald has also been identified in the area to the south-east of the fort, close to the edge of the Irthing escarpment. The reason why the burial ground lay so far away from the *vicus* had been a complete mystery for quite some time, until in 1999, the site was visited by a group of archaeologists operating under the electronic eyes of Channel-4's *The Time Team*, a British commercial TV channel's award-winning history program.

Tombstone of the Infant son of a Tribune

D M AVRELI CONCORDI VIXIT ANN VNVM D V FIL AVREL IVLIANI TRIB

To the shades of the departed Aurelius Concordius, who lived one year and five days, the son of Aurelius Julianus the tribune.

(RIB 1919; tombstone)

They were able to ascertain that the civil settlement at Birdoswald had started out on the eastern side of the fort, and the burial ground was sited just to the south of this initial community. After a fairly short amount of time had passed the civilians were moved from one side of the fort to the other, possibly after a substantial land-slip had threatened the south-eastern part of the site, and probably by order of the military. Whatever the reason for the relocation, it did not seem to effect the siting of the burial grounds, which continued in use at its original position on the opposite side of the fort.

Tombstone of Young Brothers

D M DECIBAL ... VIX DIEBVS ... ET BLAES ...VIXIT A X ET... VS FRATER...

To the spirits of the departed Decibalus [...] who lived for [...] days, and Blaesus [...] who lived for ten years, and [...] a brother [...]

Geophysical Survey of Birdoswald

A geophysical survey utilizing a number of geophysical techniques was carried out between May and October 1997. A preliminary Earthwork Survey of the entire site was followed by a Close-Contour Topographical Survey conducted within the fort's defences using a Wild TC1010 Total Station.

“The advantage of close-contour survey is that certain elements of micro-topography, not readily visible from the earthwork survey and often concealed by vegetation, become apparent (Biggins & Taylor, p.95).”

A Resistivity Survey using a GeoScan RM15 resistivity meter was conducted only within the confines of the fort due to both cost and time considerations. This survey revealed details of the Roman drainage system and also located a number of kilns. Finally, a Magnetometer Survey using a GeoScan FM36 fluxgate gradiometer was conducted both within the fort and outside the defences for a distance of 80m to the west and 120m to the east. Evidence of an extensive civil settlement was seen along the line of the Roman Military Way to the east and the west of the fort using this technique.

Other Military Sites in the Area

A Roman watch-tower or signal station lies just south of the Birdoswald fort at **Mains Rigg** on the Stanegate.

Banna Today

Birdoswald Roman Fort, Cumbria



The defences of this fort though incomplete still stand to an impressive height sporting large double gateways but no buildings remain in the interior. The nearby lengths of Hadrian's Wall are very impressive, that to the west running arrow straight to the foreshortened horizon, its last visible stretch running hidden beneath the modern road, that to the east running somewhat less than straight across the fields to the Willowford Roman bridge. The site is under continual excavation, and the old farm buildings originally constructed using material from the fort have been converted into a visitor centre. The views across the Irthing valley from the southern edge of the site are superb.

Banna Bibliography

- See: *Britannia* xxxii (2001) pp.332/3 & p.334;
A Survey of the Roman Fort and Settlement at Birdoswald, Cumbria by J.A. Biggins & D.J.A. Taylor in *Britannia* xxx (1999) pp.91-110;
Roman Coins from North-West England by David Shotton (Lancaster, 1990) pp.50-52;
Hadrian's Wall Map and Guide by the Ordnance Survey (Southampton, 1989);
Hadrian's Wall in the Days of the Romans by Ronald Embleton and Frank Graham (Newcastle, 1984) pp.234-242;
Hadrian's Wall History Trails Guidebook II by Les Turnbull (Newcastle, 1974);
The Roman Inscriptions of Britain by R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright (Oxford, 1965).
All English translations, including any inherent mistakes, are my own.

Banna Related Links

Birdoswald Roman Fort from **English Heritage**

Link to maps of the area from: **StreetMap** **Old-Maps** **MultiMap**



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