



5 cm

A MILITARY STRENGTH REPORT FROM VINDOLANDA. THE SECTION ON THE RIGHT WAS ORIGINALLY PLACED BENEATH THAT ON THE LEFT.

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# A MILITARY STRENGTH REPORT FROM VINDOLANDA

By ALAN K. BOWMAN AND J. DAVID THOMAS

(Plate VIII)

Inv.no.88/841  
Period I (ditch)

39.4 × 8.6 cm

The text here published has a claim to be the most important military document ever discovered in Britain. It was found during the 1988 season of excavation of the pre-Hadrianic area at Vindolanda.<sup>1</sup> The archaeological context in which it was found is the earliest level in which tablets are present; it was located in the ditch by the west wall of the earliest phase of the fort, beneath four successive buildings of the later periods.<sup>2</sup> The ditch appears to have been filled by A.D. 90/92 and the tablet is therefore most probably to be dated c. A.D. 90 (unless it was part of a deposit of rubbish put into the Period I ditch by the builders of the Period II structures). It would thus reflect the situation at Vindolanda only a few years after Agricola's departure from Britain, presumably just before the enlargement of the fort which made this area the site of the *praetorium* in the southern sector of the central range of buildings. The small amount of relevant evidence from other writing-tablets confuses rather than clarifies the picture. The commanding officer named in the strength report is Iulius Verecundus and there are five or six other texts associated with a man named Verecundus who may or may not be the same person (in only one case is the *gentilicium* (*Iulius*) preserved).<sup>3</sup> The find-spots of these tablets are in the later pre-Hadrianic Periods II–IV, whose chronological span runs from c. A.D. 92 to 115/20, Period IV perhaps commencing in A.D. 104.<sup>4</sup> Unless the archaeological indicators are misleading (which we have no reason to believe), we can only account for the documentary evidence by supposing either that more than one Verecundus is involved or that one and the same Verecundus was at Vindolanda for perhaps fifteen years. The evidence for the careers of equestrian officers does not suggest that a *praefectus* of an auxiliary cohort would normally remain in post for more than a decade — the length of tenure seems usually to be less than five years.<sup>5</sup> It is to be noted, however, that the evidence of a fragment of a military diploma found at Vindolanda makes it likely that the First Cohort of Tungrians, to which our strength report relates, was at Vindolanda c. A.D. 121.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to the Vindolanda Trust and to the Trustees of the British Museum for permission to publish this text. It was included in a selection of texts discussed at a seminar in Oxford in March 1989 and we are indebted to the participants for their helpful suggestions. We are again particularly grateful to Robin Birley, not only for his advice on archaeological matters; and to Dr J. N. Adams for some notes on linguistic and philological points.

The following works are referred to in abbreviated form:

*Britannia* 1987: A. K. Bowman and J. D. Thomas, 'New Texts from Vindolanda', *Britannia* 18 (1987), 125–42.

*Britannia* 1990: A. K. Bowman, J. D. Thomas and J. N. Adams, 'Two Letters from Vindolanda', *Britannia* 21 (1990), 35–52.

*ChLA*: *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores*, ed. A. Bruckner and R. Marichal.

*P. Brooklyn* 24: J. D. Thomas and R. W. Davies, 'A New Military Strength Report on Papyrus', *JRS* 67 (1977), 50–61.

*RMD*: M. M. Roxan, *Roman Military Diplomas 1978–84* University of London, Institute of Archaeology, Occasional Publication no. 9 (1985).

*RMR*: R. O. Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus* (1971).

*Tab.Vindol.*: A. K. Bowman and J. D. Thomas, *Vindolanda: the Latin Writing-Tablets* Britannia Monograph IV (1983).

<sup>2</sup> See R. Birley, *Vindolanda: the Early Timber Forts* English Heritage Publications (forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> Inv. nos 85/157, 86/396.1, 87/711, 88/839, ?88/884, 89/951. The name also occurs in what appears to be the body of a letter and is therefore probably a third-person reference (Inv. no. 89/929).

<sup>4</sup> The dendrochronology established by J. Hillam of the University of Sheffield reveals that the timbers used in the buildings of the Period IV fort were cut in A.D. 103/4.

<sup>5</sup> E. Birley, *The Roman Army: Papers 1929–86* MAVORS IV (1988), 137–8. See further lines 5–6 note.

<sup>6</sup> *RMD*, 97.

The text is written across the grain of the wood and parallel to the short edge of the leaf on a diptych, in the manner already familiar from some of the earlier official documents found at Vindolanda. Only two lines of text run over on to the second half of the diptych, the great majority of which is apparently blank. There is one physical characteristic of the text which deserves special emphasis — the sheer size of the diptych; it is a monster by comparison with all our other leaf tablets, which are no more than half its size. Given that almost half of the piece is blank, however, it cannot be envisaged that it was cut especially for this text, so we must conclude that it is merely accidental that no other leaves of this dimension have survived. The text is complete, although badly abraded in the middle section. The back of the tablet is blank.<sup>7</sup>

The hand is a typical example of Old Roman Cursive of this period.<sup>8</sup> It is competent without showing any pretensions to elegance. There is some use of ligature but this is found only rarely. We have noticed nothing unusual in any of the letter forms.

The text is a strength report of the First Cohort of Tungrians. There are three main elements. The heading contains the date, name of the unit, name of the commanding officer, and the total strength of the unit. Then follows a list of those absent on detached duties, a total of the absentees, and a total of the remaining *praesentes*. Then we are given the number of the *praesentes* who are unfit for active service, broken down into categories. This section concludes with the total of *ualentes*, obtained by subtracting the number of the unfit from the number of *praesentes*.

Apart from being the only document of its kind from Britain, this text provides us with our only known example of a strength report of an auxiliary *cohors milliaria peditata*.<sup>9</sup> It is necessary to discuss its significance in the context of (i) our evidence for the nature and content of military strength reports, (ii) our knowledge of the First Cohort of Tungrians at this period and (iii) the disposition of personnel which it attests.

#### I. MILITARY STRENGTH REPORTS

Discussions of the nature of documentary strength reports have proceeded from the supposition, based implicitly if not explicitly on Vegetius<sup>10</sup> and perhaps owing more than a little to experience of military organization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that the practice of recording unit strength and activity in the Roman army and the forms in which it was recorded were uniform and common to the whole organization. The supposition is supported, though hardly proved, by general statements such as that of Appian<sup>11</sup> that in the second century it was customary for the centurion to submit to the commander a daily report (βιβλίον ἐφήμερον) of the numerical strength of the unit. It certainly underlies the analysis by Fink, who identifies three main types of strength report, which he calls morning reports, monthly summaries and *pridiana* (although admitting one example (*RMR* 66) which he considers unclassifiable, mainly because it is incomplete).<sup>12</sup> Before considering the nature of our Vindolanda report in more detail, it will be useful to review Fink's classification and to add some remarks about documents published subsequently.

1. Morning Reports: *RMR* 47–50, and possibly 51–6 and 67. Six elements have been identified: (a) the date, total number of personnel, a breakdown into various categories with the number of centurions and other NCOs, (b) the full name of the unit, (c) the name of the commander, followed by the password, (d) departures, returns and other items of special interest, (e) the orders of the day and the oath, (f) the names and ranks of the guards who performed the *excubatio ad signa*. Of the texts assigned to this category, all relate to the Twentieth Cohort of Palmyrenes, stationed at Dura-Europos, except for *RMR* 51, 52, 53 and 67, all of which are doubtful. Although each of these four texts contains elements or references

<sup>7</sup> Robin Birley informs us that the leaf is made of oak.

<sup>8</sup> See *Tab. Vindol.*, pp. 55–60.

<sup>9</sup> The milliary Twentieth Cohort of Palmyrenes is *equitata*, see C. B. Welles, R. O. Fink and J. F. Gilliam, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report V*,

*Part I: The Parchments and Papyri* (1959), 28–36.

<sup>10</sup> e.g. Vegetius II.19 and cf. *HA, Sev. Alex.* 21.

<sup>11</sup> *BC*, v.46.

<sup>12</sup> *RMR*, pp. 179–82.

(such as the *excubatio*, the *admissa*, the oath) which appear in the papyri from Dura-Europos, Fink in every case expresses doubts or reservations as to whether they really are morning reports. 51 'may be . . . a different kind of text' (p. 198); in 52, *reliqui praesentes* 'suggests a summary . . . or even a *pridianum*' (p. 201); in 53, seven-eighths of the text is likely to be missing, there are elements of a journal but also narrative sections or reports (p. 204); 67 'may be a letter' (p. 239); but this seems to depend on the reading *sal]utem* [which is very doubtful and is read quite differently by Marichal.<sup>13</sup> The model for the 'Morning Report' thus rests entirely on texts from Dura. Furthermore, it should be noted that, of these texts, only *RMR* 47 exactly fits the model as analyzed above; *RMR* 50 has deviations and the others are very fragmentary.

2. Monthly Summaries: *RMR* 58–62 (of which 60 is doubtful). Alternatively described as 'interim *pridiana*',<sup>14</sup> these are admittedly not all of the same type and the small amount of surviving text and the differences between them make it difficult to specify their uses. *RMR* 60–2 are from Dura. The idea that this group shows the practice of making a monthly inventory rests on the date in *RMR* 62 (*kal octob[r]eš*); *kal ianu* [in *RMR* 60 is not obviously at the beginning of the text and might easily be a date in December. There is no good reason to place *RMR* 59 in this category and *RMR* 58 is included only by virtue of the fact that it accounts for all the *immunes* in a century and then gives the total of *reliqui*.

3. *Pridiana*: *RMR* 63–4, *P. Brooklyn* 24. The only one of Fink's categories for which the documents themselves supply a technical name.<sup>15</sup> The *pridianum* records (a) accessions to the unit, (b) losses, and (c) absentees, providing a total picture of the strength of the unit on 31 December (*pridie Kalendas Ianuarias*, hence the term *pridianum*); for Egypt, the supposed regularity of the date is complicated by the fact that the Egyptian year ends in late August. *RMR* 64, from Egypt and dated *pridie kal(endas) Septembres*, is taken as the model and its date is explained with reference to the anomaly of the Egyptian year.<sup>16</sup> *P. Brooklyn* 24 conforms fairly well but its heading (and date) is not preserved, nor does it use the word *pridianum*. It may, of course, be purely accidental that *RMR* 64 dates from near the beginning of the Egyptian year. One might well ask why the Roman army, whose official documents were in Latin, needed to take any notice of the Egyptian civil year. Finally, the word *pridianum* itself need not imply anything annual — it could perfectly well apply to a report submitted on the last day of each month.

The texts which might seem most strongly to support the idea of an annual *pridianum* on 31 December are *RMR* 63, the so-called Moesian *pridianum*, and *ChLA* XI, 501 (see below, No. 4 (e)). *RMR* 63 provides many problems of interpretation, not the least of which is the nature of the text in col. i.1–23. Marichal is surely right to say, however, in his introduction to *ChLA* XI, 501, that we can now prove that *RMR* 63 was *not* a *pridianum*, rather an 'état occasionnel' in which reference is made to a *pridianum*; his restoration is persuasive. Similarly, *ChLA* XI, 501, which does carry a reference in line 5 to the date *Kal(endis) Ian(uariis)* (the reading of a consular date in line 2 is much less secure) clearly refers to a *pridianum* without itself being one, as does *RMR* 63. The existence of the *pridianum* as a type of strength report is guaranteed, but of the alleged examples we are inclined to regard only *RMR* 64 as secure and *P. Brooklyn* 24 as probable. The foundation of the belief that there was an annual *pridianum* with more frequent interim reports seems uncertain. It would be just as rational to hypothesize a *pridianum* submitted on the last day of each month. Further progress can be made only with new evidence.

4. To these we can add various other texts which are clearly strength reports: (a) *RMR* 65, from Dura, which Fink was not able to classify, though it is clearly concerned with the strength of the cohort and has details of assignments and returns of soldiers. (b) *ChLA* X, 443 offers a total number, followed by *abšen[tes]*, *aegr[i]*, then *reliq(ui) exp[ungen]t(ur)*. (c) *ChLA* X, 454 gives a number of *reliqui*, then various detachments. (d) *ChLA* XI, 479 is dated *xii Kal(endas) Iq[n(uarias)]*, then gives a total with deductions of detached personnel

<sup>13</sup> *ChLA* IV, 270.

<sup>14</sup> *RMR*, p. 181. See below, no. 3.

<sup>15</sup> The word *pridianum* occurs in *RMR*, 63.24, 64.1 and *ChLA* XI, 501.2 (see below, no. 4 (e)).

<sup>16</sup> *RMR*, pp. 181–2.

inside and outside the province. (e) *ChLA* XI, 501 is dated *v Kal(endas) [I]umias*, followed by *pr[idi]anum detulit . . .*, then *summa mi]l(itum) per[f](ecta) k(alendis) Ian(uariis)*. As Marichal says, this is clearly not a *pridianum*, but an 'état occasionnel' which refers to a previous *pridianum*.

5. Daily reports. Marichal, *CRAI* 1979, 436–52, *Tab.Vindol.1*. Marichal describes sixty-three examples of reports of a small unit at Bu Njem, presented each day to the *praepositus* who, he thinks, will have extracted from them details for incorporation into more comprehensive reports like those from Dura (op. cit., 440). The sample text gives the date, a total number, then a list of assigned duties, then the *aegri* (named). In form this is much like *Tab.Vindol.1* which gives the date, the total number of men in the *fabricae*, then a list of different categories of workmen or jobs. The passage of Appian mentioned above (p. 63) gives a term which seems an appropriate description for texts of this kind (βιβλίον ἐφήμερον).

6. A leaf tablet from Caerleon, like those from Vindolanda, dating to the Flavian period and containing a report, presumably referring to a legionary unit, which seems to describe future movements of soldiers (*petituri, referent, exient*).<sup>17</sup>

7. *Renuntia* from Vindolanda.<sup>18</sup> These are somewhat different because they are not strength reports, but are worth considering here because they have a technical name which comes in the form of a word which occurs nowhere else in classical Latin. They are formulaic and are clearly reports which are made routinely and frequently (perhaps daily). We now have additional examples which have enabled us to identify the following elements in this type of report: (a) date, (b) the term *renuntium* followed by the name of the unit, in all cases *cohors viiii Batauorum*, (c) the phrase *ad loca quidebunt et impedimenta*, (d) *renuntiauit/-uerunt n/nn optio/-nes*. It is worth noting that the word *renuntium* is new and now the second technical term which describes a kind of military report.<sup>19</sup> The word or words *quidebunt* appear consistently in that form and are difficult to explain.<sup>20</sup> Whatever the precise meaning, they suggest that the reports simply followed an exemplar which may be confined to Vindolanda, perhaps even to the regime of one particular commander. More generally, they put us in mind of the passage in which Polybius describes, with reference to the army of the Republican period, the procedures for distribution and collection of written wooden tablets in order to circulate the password and inspect the guard.<sup>21</sup>

Tabulated thus, the evidence suggests much less uniformity than Fink's classification implies. *Pridiana* are peculiar to Egypt, apart from the one reference in the Moesian text (*RMR* 63) and that almost certainly concerns a unit which had recently been in Egypt. Other types of documents, such as the morning reports, are peculiar to particular locations, though there is a broad degree of resemblance between the daily reports on the ostraka from Bu Njem and *Tab.Vindol.1*. This may be purely coincidental and it is true that the sample on which we are working is tiny. But it suggests that we should perhaps be prepared to admit more decentralization and room for local initiative and variation than we have hitherto imagined. That said, it seems obvious that all army units must have been required to compile regular strength reports which were presumably submitted to the provincial governor.

As for the new strength report of the First Cohort of Tungrians, it is evident that this cannot be straightforwardly classified as a *pridianum*: the date is inappropriate and it does not list accessions, losses, and absentees in the appropriate form. Nor does it appear to be a daily report, although it does list those who are unfit for service and might, in the abraded section in the middle, specify what some of the detachments were doing. The documents which it most resembles fall into Fink's 'monthly summary' category, but there is no doubt that the Vindolanda report does not fall on the first of a month. It is perhaps best to regard it as an example of an interim strength report from which a *pridianum* could eventually be compiled. We might go further and suggest that the 'monthly summary' and the *pridianum* should perhaps be regarded as complementary types of document within the same category. It is also worth bearing in mind that the archaeological context of the Vindolanda tablet gives us no

<sup>17</sup> R. S. O. Tomlin, *Britannia* 17 (1986), 450–2.

<sup>18</sup> *Britannia* 1987, no. 2.

<sup>19</sup> cf. *Britannia* 1987, 133.

<sup>20</sup> See *Britannia* 1987, 134–5.

<sup>21</sup> Polybius, vi.34.7–36.9.

reason to suppose that this document went into the official archives of the unit — it is perhaps more likely to have been an interim report compiled for the commanding officer. There is some support for this in the text itself. In several places the numbers are rather crushed in, as if that part of the information was added after the outline of the report had been drafted, and we are inclined to think that the left-hand side of lines 5–15 was written first, before the numbers were added at the right.

## II. THE FIRST COHORT OF TUNGRIANS

The presence of this unit is well attested in the region of Hadrian's Wall in the second and third centuries and it ultimately became the garrison unit at Housesteads. The conjecture that it was one of the Tungrian units which fought with Agricola at Mons Graupius was strengthened by its appearance in a letter from Vindolanda for which the archaeological context indicated a date within the period c. A.D. 95–105.<sup>22</sup> The letter is addressed to one Priscinus and refers to his having despatched soldiers of the cohort with letters to the governor. We conjectured that Priscinus might be the prefect of the cohort and that it might have succeeded the Ninth Cohort of Batavians (which at that time we mistakenly identified as the Eighth) as the garrison at Vindolanda.<sup>23</sup> The new strength report obviously necessitates another look at the evidence.

The diploma of A.D. 103 assures us that at that date the First Cohort of Tungrians was milliary.<sup>24</sup> We also know that it was commanded by a *praefectus* rather than a tribune. By A.D. 122, the unit was quingenary, the reduction in size presumably to be accounted for by the removal of a vexillation.<sup>25</sup> It had, however, been increased again by the reign of Antoninus Pius, as is shown by an inscription and by a fragment of a diploma of A.D. 146, found at Vindolanda, which was issued to a soldier of *cohors i Tungrorum milliaria* who will therefore have been recruited c. A.D. 121.<sup>26</sup>

Our new Vindolanda text shows a unit strength which ought notionally to be *milliaria* and names the *praefectus* as Iulius Verecundus. It does not actually state that the cohort was stationed at Vindolanda but the find-spot entitles us to assume it, in default of any evidence to the contrary. The archaeological context would date the tablet c. A.D. 90. This means that the unit will have been one of the earliest milliary formations.<sup>27</sup> It should be noted, however, that if this text relates to the earliest phase of the pre-Hadrianic forts at Vindolanda, the fort would not have been large enough to accommodate the entire unit (see below, p. 68). Its presence at Vindolanda c. A.D. 121 is probable.<sup>28</sup> For the period between c. A.D. 90 and 121 there is no conclusive evidence. We cannot be certain about the other texts which mention Verecundus (above, p. 63). Our earlier guess that the Priscinus addressed in *Tab. Vindol. 30* was prefect of the Tungrian cohort c. A.D. 105 can neither be substantiated nor refuted (above). The archaeological date of our strength report implies that the Tungrian cohort was at Vindolanda before the Ninth Batavian, but it (or part of it) might have stayed there with the Batavian cohort, or indeed, outlasted it (see lines 5–6 note). In fact, the strength report fits well into the body of evidence which suggests that parts of different units were regularly brigaded together.<sup>29</sup> We have as yet found no other direct evidence in the tablets for the Tungrian cohort; some of the Germanic names which occur in our texts<sup>30</sup> might be connected with the Tungrian unit, but they might just as easily belong to a cohort of Batavians.

<sup>22</sup> *Tab. Vindol.*, 30. There remains some doubt about the dating. In Period IV the place where the tablet was found was in a barracks building which would not be expected to contain the correspondence of a commanding officer. If not from Period IV, this text (and the whole of the Archive of Priscinus) will belong to Period III.

<sup>23</sup> We originally read the name as Crispinus. For the correction see *Britannia* 1987, 129. For the Ninth Cohort of Batavians, *ibid.*, 134 and note that the reference to a reading of *coh vii ba[il]* is a misprint for *viii*.

<sup>24</sup> *CIL*, xvi. 48.

<sup>25</sup> *CIL*, xvi. 69–70. For the fragility of the evidence for removal to Noricum see *RMD*, 97, line 4 note. See also

J. Smeesters, 'Les Tunгри dans l'armée romaine, état actuel de nos connaissances', in D. Haupt and H. G. Horn (eds), *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms: Vorträge des 10. internationalen Limeskongresses in der Germania Inferior*, Bf Beih. 38 (1977), 175–86.

<sup>26</sup> *RIB*, 2155 (Castlecary), *RMD*, 97.

<sup>27</sup> Birley, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 349–64.

<sup>28</sup> *RMD*, 97, line 4 note.

<sup>29</sup> See below, p. 68 and note that this strength report is the basis for the remark by S. S. Frere, *Britannia* 20 (1980), 273 about the sequence of units in garrison at Vindolanda.

<sup>30</sup> Notably in *Britannia* 1990, no. 1.

## III. ORGANIZATION OF THE UNIT AND DISPOSITION OF THE PERSONNEL

Before discussing in detail the information provided by the document, it will be useful to summarize the numerical breakdown of the unit. It should be noted that the readings of all the numerals are not absolutely certain (see notes to lines 3, 7, 17, 19, 26) but the orders of magnitude are certainly correct and the margin of error applies only to digits below 10. With this proviso, the unit strength is as follows:

Line 3	Total	752	incl. 6 centurions
Absentees:			
Line 5	Singulares	46	
Line 7	Corbridge	337	incl. ?2 centurions
Line 9	London	1	?centurion
Line 10	...	6	incl. 1 centurion
Line 12	...	9	incl. 1 centurion
Line 14	...	11	
Line 15	...	1	
Line 16	...	45	
Line 17	Total	456	incl. 5 centurions
Present:			
Line 19		296	incl. 1 centurion
Of whom there are:			
Line 25	Unfit	31	
Line 26	Healthy	265	incl. 1 centurion

The first point which calls for comment is the overall strength of the unit and the number of centurions. The First Tungrian cohort was a peditate milliary unit which, according to orthodox dogma based on the statement of Hyginus 28, should have had ten centuries. Although there is no positive proof of the notion that the centuries will have been eighty strong,<sup>31</sup> the figure of 752 is tolerably close to a notional strength of 800. There can be, however, no possible doubt that the Tungrian cohort had only six centurions. There is good evidence for the existence of only six centuries in *equitate* milliary cohorts (such as the Twentieth Cohort of Palmyrenes) and it has been supposed that they might consist of six centuries of 140/150 each plus five *turmae*; scholars differ in their views of how such an arrangement might have evolved.<sup>32</sup> There is nothing in our Vindolanda text to indicate the size of centuries. Six centuries in a notional strength of 800 would give us an approximately 130-strong century, but the dispositions of the unit listed in our text do not support such a figure. It may simply be that during a period when the size of the unit fluctuated somewhat (being brought up to milliary size in the 80s and then reduced to quingenary between 103 and 122) it proved impractical to maintain a strictly 'correct' number of constituent centuries. If we have read the figures correctly, it is striking that only three of the six centurions are in charge of

<sup>31</sup> See S. S. Frere and J. J. Wilkes, *Strageath, Excavations within the Roman Fort 1973-86* Britannia Monograph IX (1989), 118.

<sup>32</sup> M. Hassall, 'The Internal Planning of Roman Auxiliary Forts', in B. R. Hartley and J. S. Wachter (eds), *Rome and her Northern Provinces* (1983), 99-100.

major sections of the unit, one at Vindolanda and two (?) at Corbridge (see below, line 15, note); of the remaining three, one is at London on his own and the other two are in charge of six and nine men respectively. Again, this may reflect the tendency to make *ad hoc* arrangements in frontier regions during periods of flux. Even so, given the small amount of documentary evidence for the actual size and organization of auxiliary units, it is striking that almost all of it diverges in some degree from what orthodoxy regards as the norm.

The details of the disposition of the unit are also remarkable. The forty-six *singulares legati* will have been the contribution of *pedites* made by the Tungrian unit to the governor's guard (see line 5, note). Then there are 337, by far the largest single group, stationed 'coris'. There is every likelihood this is Corbridge and this is the strongest single piece of evidence relevant to the debate about its Latin name — it was probably simply *Coria* (see line 7, note). It is remarkable that this large section of the unit, which outnumbers that left behind at Vindolanda, is probably under the command of just two centurions, possibly only one. Following this we apparently have a single centurion in London, presumably on some special mission or message.<sup>33</sup> The postings or activities of the following four groups are unfortunately impossible to elucidate; only the last is sizeable, consisting of forty-five men (with no centurion). We have considered the possibility that these were *thetati* (the deceased), but this is the wrong position in the text for such an entry.<sup>34</sup> The number might be suitable as a detachment for garrisoning one of the Stanegate fortlets, perhaps with an *optio* rather than a centurion in command.<sup>35</sup> Finally, it is worth noting that of the almost 300 who remained at Vindolanda, with one centurion, more than 10 per cent were unfit for service; this text is unique in dividing them into categories, *aegri*, *uolnerati* and *lippientes*.<sup>36</sup>

The most striking feature is the division of the unit into two major sections of which the larger was away from base at Corbridge. If the text relates to the earliest of the forts at Vindolanda, at c. 3.5 acres it would not have been large enough to hold the whole milliary unit. On the other hand, it would certainly have accommodated more than 300 *pedites*. This strength report attests a degree of fragmentation which is by no means unique; accumulating evidence suggests, indeed, that it might well have been relatively normal, at least on the British frontier at this period. Corbridge may be a case in point (see line 7, note). The writing-tablets attest the presence of the Ninth and Third Batavian cohorts at Vindolanda, as well as the First Tungrian. There is some evidence for legionary soldiers too in an account which records rations dispensed to them and we have a fragment of a letter addressed to an *aquilifer* of *legio II Augusta*. Analysis of the buildings at the Flavian fort at Strageath suggests that the garrison will have consisted at first of a *cohors quingenaria equitata* minus one century and two *turmae*, four *turmae* and three (under-strength) centuries of another *cohors equitata* and a legionary century; and, under revised arrangements, a *cohors equitata* with four *turmae* but missing two of its six centuries and four *turmae* and three centuries of a second cohort.<sup>37</sup> The area of 4.36 acres could have held a milliary garrison.<sup>38</sup> Two auxiliary units were brigaded together at Dalswinton.<sup>39</sup>

In default of detailed evidence for the layout of the barracks and other buildings at Vindolanda, we cannot combine the archaeology and the documents in a way which would, ideally, reveal the nature of the early occupation. The evidence which has accumulated in the last two or three decades strongly militates against any notion that units would remain in relatively permanent garrisons constructed for them according to a model which can be reconstructed on the basis of the composition of particular types of units.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>33</sup> For another London connection in the Vindolanda tablets see *Britannia* 1990, no. 1.

<sup>34</sup> At *RMR*, 63.ii.11 they are included among losses, not absentees, and at *P. Brooklyn*, 24.ii.5 they are the last entry before *summa qui decesserunt*.

<sup>35</sup> See C. Daniels, 'The Flavian and Trajanic Northern Frontier', in M. Todd (ed.), *Research on Roman Britain 1960-89* Britannia Monograph XI (1989), 31-5 at 35, cf. G. S. Maxwell, 'Excavations at the Roman fort of Crawford, Lanarkshire', *PSAS* 104 (1971/2), 147-200 at 178.

<sup>36</sup> See R. Jackson, 'Roman Doctors and their Instruments: Recent Research into Ancient Practice', *JRA* 3 (1990), 5-27 at 13.

<sup>37</sup> Frere and Wilkes, op. cit. (n. 31), 120-1.

<sup>38</sup> idem, 117.

<sup>39</sup> S. S. Frere and J. K. St Joseph, *Roman Britain from the Air* (1983), 123-6.

<sup>40</sup> For a clear statement of the position see V. A. Maxfield, 'Pre-Flavian Forts and their Garrisons', *Britannia* 17 (1986), 59-72 at 59.



## Text (Pl. VIII):

	xv k(alendas) iunias n(umerus) p[ co]h i tūngro-	
	rum cui praest iulius uere-	
	çundus praef(ectus) dççlii in is (centuriones) vi	
	ex eis absentes	
5	singulares leg(ati) xlvi	
	officio fçrocis	
	coris ççcxxxvii	
	in is (centuriones) ii	
	londinio ?(centurio)	
10	uaç . . . ad[ . . . ] . . . apaçun . . . vi	
	in is (centurio) i	
	]aç . . . . . allia viiii	
	in is (centurio) i	
	. . . c . . . ipençiatum xi	
15	]in . a i	
	xxxxv	
	summa absentes cccclvi	
	in is (centuriones) v	
	reliqui praesentes cclxxxvi	
20	in is (centurio) i	
	ex eis	
	aegri xv	
	uolnerati vi	
	lippientes [x]	
25	summa eo[um] xxxi	
	reliqui ualent[es] cc]lxy	
	in [is (centurio) i]	

## Translation:

	18 May, net number of the First Cohort of Tungrians, of which the commander is Iulius Verecundus the prefect, 752, including 6 centurions.	
	Of whom there are absent:	
	Guards of the governor at the office of Ferox	46
	At Coria	337
		including (?) 2 centurions
	At London	(?) a centurion
	...	6
		including 1 centurion
	...	9
		including 1 centurion
	...	11
	At ... (?)	(?) 1
		45
	Total absentees	456
		including 5 centurions
	Remainder, present	296
		including 1 centurion
	From these:	
	Sick	15
	Wounded	6
	Suffering from inflammation of the eyes	10
	Total of these	31
	Remainder, fit for active service	265
		including 1 centurion

## Notes:

1–3. None of the elements in the heading is unexpected but as a whole it is not precisely comparable to the headings of other military documents, of which comparatively few survive intact. That of *RMR* 64, the *pridianum*, has much more detail including the consular date and the station. The morning report from Dura (*RMR* 47) has a more detailed breakdown of the cohort, followed by the password. Reports of other types have less detail. *RMR* 62 ('monthly summary') has simply the date followed by the number of *equites*; in the ostrakon from Bu Njem (Marichal, *CRAI* 1979, 439) the date is followed by a bare number; *Tab.Vindol.* 1 has a date followed by *fabr̄icis h(omines) cccxxxxiii*.

As far as the date is concerned, it is to be noted that it must reflect the state of the unit at the period of maximum military activity (early summer). *xv k(alendas) Iunias* (the reading *xii k(alendas)* is not wholly excluded but is far less probable) suggests no obvious connection with *pridiana*. Gilliam's view (*Roman Army Papers* (MAVORS II, 1986), 263–72) that strength reports were made at intervals (probably monthly) throughout the year and then summarized at the end of the year seems to us persuasive. But our Vindolanda strength report would then have to be seen as an internal, interim report from which the monthly *pridianum* was compiled. It is difficult to find any evidence for regularity in dates. The so-called Moesian *pridianum* may have *XV k Octobres* (*RMR* 63.i.23) but Marichal (*ChLA* III, 219) read *XVI* followed by a medial stop. *RMR* 66 b ii.9 ('unclassified') records the strength of the Twentieth Palmyrene Cohort at *XV kal Octobr*, followed by a string of dates against which is entered *n(umerus) p(urus) mansit*.

1. There are difficulties in reading what follows the date. *n* with a superscript bar is clear. the next letter looks like *o*, but could be *c* or *p*. If it is *p*, parallels (e.g. *RMR* 47.i.1, ii.1, 50.i.5, *ChLA* x, 454, xi, 479) strongly suggest *numerus purus*; it is not clear whether the superscript bar extends beyond the *n* and therefore whether or not *purus* (if that is indeed the reading) was abbreviated; but there is hardly room for it to have been written in full. The next clear letter is a *t*; before this we might have another *t*, but it can just be read as *i* with a superscript bar (i.e. the number one), and before this we might read part of *h* in the capital form. What we expect here is the name of the unit and the only possibility we can envisage is *coh(ortis) i Tungrorum*, which fits the other evidence for the identity of units in this area at this period. After *t* it is very difficult to read *u*; then *n* is clear; the next letter looks most like a square *o* but may be read as *g* if we assume that the tail is no longer visible; then *r* is clear; of the rest of *tungrorum* all that can be said is that the reading would at least suit the meagre remaining traces. All in all, the reading is palaeographically fragile, but the historical evidence makes it overwhelmingly probable that it is correct. For recent evidence for the unit's presence in Britain see *Britannia* 18 (1987), 369, no. 10, an undated inscription from Housesteads reading *coh(ors) I Tu(ngrorum)*; *Britannia* 19 (1988), 502, no. 70 (a spear-head from Vindolanda, after A.D. 120, with a punched inscription reading *tung*).

2. *praest*: cf. *ChLA* xi, 501.5. This can only be haplography. Therefore read *prae<e>st*.

2–3. *iulius uerecundus*: the name Verecundus appears (in only one case with the *gentilicium*) in five or six other unpublished texts from Vindolanda (for the difficulties of interpreting this material, see above, p. 62).

3. *praef*: unusually for a milliary cohort, the First Tungrian was regularly commanded by a prefect rather than a tribune, see Smeesters, op. cit. (n. 25).

*dççlii*: the first two digits are relatively clear. Thereafter the readings are more conjectural. Palaeographically, we cannot exclude *dcccl*, but since the number in line 17 is clearly over 450 and that in line 19 over 250, a number in the 700s is required. It would be possible to read *dclxi* but the reading we have adopted fits more easily with the other numbers.

(*centuriones*) *vi*: there is no doubt about the reading and the number is guaranteed by the individual dispositions and the total given below. This is a major surprise. For the difficulties involved in assessing unit strength and organization see above, p. 67. If this strength report is to be dated c.A.D. 90 it may attest the Tungrian unit at a time when its enlargement and reorganization were still incomplete.

5-6. *leg*: this is not an easy reading — the last letter looks more like *s* than *g*, but the sense renders *leg(ati)* inescapable. We are in some doubt as to how we should interpret these lines. It is worth comparing *RMR* 63.ii.25, *singulares fabi iusti legat in is carus dec e[*, Fabius Iustus being the governor of the province; that is followed (line 26) by *officii latimiani proc aqg* and on that basis we might expect that our *officio ferocis* refers to a detachment serving with the procurator. However, we do not think there are any traces of ink visible at the end of line 6 and it is very unlikely that ink would not show up at this point where the tablet is less abraded than on the left. We are therefore inclined to suggest that we should take the two lines as a single, rather carelessly expressed, entry.

*singulares*: on the *singulares* in general see M. P. Speidel, *Guards of the Roman Armies* Antiquitas Reihe 1.28 (1978), and on the British *singulares*, *ibid.*, Appendix 1, 126ff.; R. W. Davies, 'Singulares and Roman Britain', *Britannia* 7 (1976), 134-44; M. Hassall, 'Roman Soldiers in Roman London', in D. E. Strong (ed.), *Archaeological Theory and Practice* (1973), 231-7; 'Roman Britain in 1987', *Britannia* 19 (1988), 496. The provincial governor's corps of *singulares* consisted of 500 *pedites* and 500 *equites*. The contribution of the First Tungrian Cohort to this corps was forty-six *pedites*. It is generally agreed that the *singulares* of the governor of Britain were based in London at the Cripplegate fort (Hassall, *op. cit.*). They might be employed on special duties (see Speidel, *op. cit.*, 44).

The location of this group depends on the interpretation of *officio ferocis*. If *Ferox* is some official other than the governor to whom the *singulares* were detached we would expect him to be high-ranking (note that there is no reason to think that the soldiers serving in the *officium* of the procurator in *RMR* 63.ii.26 were *singulares*). One possibility is that he was a legionary legate, to whom some of the governor's *singulares* were attached (*leg(ati)* without further qualification must surely refer to the provincial governor). It is a difficulty, but perhaps not a decisive one, that an inscription of the reign of Trajan proves that a *legatus legionis* could have his own *singulares* (*AE* 1969/70, 583.6-7 = M. P. Speidel, 'The Captor of Decebalus', *JRS* 60 (1970), 142-53, cf. *idem*, *Guards of the Roman Armies* (1978), 78-9). *Ferox* is not a common cognomen. The two consuls of this period who bear it are Cn. Pompeius Ferox Licinianus (suff. 98) about whom nothing else is known and Iulius Ferox (suff. ?99) (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> 1 306), who had held a provincial governorship at some time before the date of Pliny, *Ep.* x.87 (i.e. before c. A.D. 110), in which post he is said to have recognized the merits of Nymphidius Sabinus. The chronology of his career suggests the possibility that he might have held a legionary legateship c. A.D. 90 and the most likely unit would surely be *legio IX Hispana*, based at York. The archaeological context of the tablet seems to rule out the possibility that the reference is to Iulius Ferox as provincial governor, a post which he could, in theory, have held c. A.D. 105, where there is ample room in the *fasti* between Neratius Marcellus and Metilius Bradua, see A. R. Birley, *The Fasti of Roman Britain* (1981), 87ff.

*officium*: compare *P. Brooklyn* 24.iii.10, *officio epistrategi theb. .os*.

7. *coris*: this can hardly be anywhere other than Corbridge and it provides the clearest piece of evidence relevant to the long-standing doubt about the Latin name of the site. The natural assumption must be that it was *Coria* and that *Coris* is a locative form, = *coriis*. The contraction of *-ii-* is standard by this time in all but the most formal writing. For Vindolanda see *Britannia* 21 (1990), 33-52, no. 2.9, *Tab. Vindol.*, p. 73 and cf. J. N. Adams, 'The Latinity of C. Novius Eunus', *ZPE* 82 (1990), 227-47 at 235. The root *corio-* is Celtic (A. Holder, *Altceltische Sprachschatz* (1896-1913), 1, 1126), cf. A. L. F. Rivet and C. Smith, *The Place-names of Roman Britain* (1979), 317ff. In the case of some place-names there may have been interference from the Latin *curia*, as Rivet and Smith suggest, but obviously not in this name. The form of the locative shows that Latin speakers interpreted *Coria* as a neuter plural. J. G. F. Hind, 'The Romano-British Name for Corbridge', *Britannia* 11 (1980), 165-71 argues for Corioritum as a Roman adoption for the successive bases and forts at Corbridge.

ççcxxxvii: only the reading of the last two digits of the numeral is open to any serious doubt, so the figure must be well in excess of 300 and it is very surprising to find almost half of the strength of the Tungrian cohort at Corbridge in the charge of only two centurions (see note to line 15). There are no solid clues as to the nature of the garrison of the early forts at

Corbridge (Phases 1a and 1b), see M. C. Bishop and J. N. Dore, *Corbridge, Excavation of the Roman Fort and Town 1947–80* (1988), 129. Fort 1a may be about 13 acres in area, larger than the standard auxiliary-cohort-sized fort, but smaller than a legionary fortress, and it seems to fit into the pattern of the so-called ‘vexillation fortress’, see S. S. Frere and J. K. St Joseph, ‘The Roman Fortress at Longthorpe’, *Britannia* 5 (1974), 1–129, at 6–7. There is no doubt, therefore, that the section of the Tungrian cohort will have been only one element in the garrison of Corbridge at this time.

8. *Is* could be explained as a contracted form of *iis* (cf. *coris* < *coriis* (line 7, note)). In lines 4 and 21, however, the writer uses the form *eis* with *ex*. Would he have written one form of the ablative plural of *is* with *in*, but another with *ex*? Contrast *ChLA* x, 454 which has *in eis* in line 12 and *ex eis* in line 40. It is obviously possible that *is* represents *his*, with loss of *h*. But since one cannot be certain that the writer would not have alternated between *in i(i)s* and *ex eis*, the form he intended in *is* should be left open. *I(i)s* and *(h)is* are later hopelessly confused in manuscripts (see *TLL* vi.3.2692.25ff.) and the ambiguity of this form illustrates the reason.

(*centuriones*) *ii*: for the reading of the numeral see note to line 15.

9. The entry seems to suggest one single centurion at London, see note to line 15; there is no trace of any numeral after the centurial sign. For contacts between Vindolanda and London, see *Britannia* 21 (1990), 33–52, no. 1 and cf. our note to lines 5–6, above.

10–16. These lines present major problems of reading and interpretation, mainly because of severe abrasion of the writing at the left-hand side. It is clear from the figures at the right that the entries concern small detachments of troops. We might expect simply to have place-names at the left, as we have in lines 7 and 9, but the amount of writing in lines 10, 12 and 14 seems too great for this, unless all the names were composite ones such as *Isurium Brigantum*. Any attempt to elucidate these lines on this assumption is further hampered by the high degree of probability that the place-names, if that is what we have, are unknown.

A second possibility is that the entries describe the activities of different groups, such as we find, for example, in *RMR* 63.ii.27ff., sometimes with places specified. Lines 10 and 14 seem more likely to be of this type than the other entries.

10. The first three letters seem relatively clear and suggest the beginning of a place-name, though there is no known name in the region which begins like this. *uēs* might be read instead of *uq̄s*. A short place-name followed by *ad* plus gerund or gerundive?

12. Presumably four to five letters are missing, then we have something like *jaç... aqlum*, but it could be read differently. Thereafter, it is very difficult to read *gallia*; perhaps *pal̄lia*?

14. The traces invite the reading *stipendiatum* or something like it and one could adduce *stipendiari* in Pliny, *NH* 6.68 (‘to serve for pay under’), cf. *ad opinionem stip* and *ad opinionem peten* (*RMR* 66 b.i.29–30, ii.1) and [*ad opin*]ionem *peten(dam)* in the Caerleon tablet, R. S. O. Tomlin, *Britannia* 17 (1986), 450–2, no. 84, and R. W. Davies, ‘Ratio and Opinio in Roman Military Documents’, *Historia* 16 (1967), 115–18. Then we would have a reference to a group which had gone off to collect pay; Tomlin suggests (op. cit., note to line 1) that the size of such a party for a *cohors milliaria* would be about thirty men, but this is not decisive against such an interpretation of the entry in the Vindolanda text. The much greater problems are that *stipendiatum* is hard to explain grammatically and also difficult to read, particularly the *e* and *d*.

15. The length of line makes it look as if we simply have a place-name and *jin. a*, possibly *jinna*, would be suitable, though it does not look like a locative; but other readings are possible. What we have read as the digit *i* might, alternatively, be read as a centurial sign. The same possibility exists in line 9 (see note) and both entries need to be considered against the reading of the number of centurions in line 8 and the fact that we must arrive at a total number of five absent centurions (line 18). It is conceivable that we have only one centurion at Coria (line 8), one in London and one in line 15. The traces in line 8 favour *ii*, however, and the character in line 15 looks very much like the numeral at the end of line 13; whereas that in line 9 is much more sharply angled.

16. Given the lack of any trace at all at the left of line 16, it is difficult to know what to make of the entry as a whole. Perhaps the entry at the left was very short and has left no trace. We have considered and rejected the possibility that this refers to *thetati* (deceased). Note that forty-five soldiers is an appropriate force for the garrison of a small outpost (see above, p. 68). It is worth noting that the writer has left a noticeably larger than usual space after line 16, where the detailed account of the *absentes* ends.

17. The reading of the first five digits of the number is beyond any reasonable doubt.  $\nu$  is probable after this but nothing thereafter can be read securely. The number of *absentes* must be between 450 and 459. For *summa absentes* cf. *RMR* 50.i.6, 12, 63.ii.23, 38.

19. The reading of the first five digits of the number is secure, so we must have at least 270 *praesentes*. The small figures depend on calculation.

22-5. The ostrakon from Bu Njem (Marichal, *CRAI* 1979, 439) includes an entry for *aegri* and names three individuals. See also *RMR* 63.ii.44 and *ChLA* x, 443.ii.3. What is remarkable in our Vindolanda text is that the unfit are broken down into categories and comprise, in all, over 10 per cent of the *praesentes*. See the note by R. Jackson, loc. cit. (n. 36); note also the Latin text from Masada, *P.Yadin* 723.

24. *lippientes*: palaeographically, the reading of the first four letters is unclear but the traces are compatible with the reading suggested. The term refers to chronic general inflammation of the eyes. See Kind, *RE* XIII (1927), 723-6; R. Jackson, *Doctors and Diseases in the Roman Empire* (1988), 82-5; G. C. Boon, 'Potters, oculists and eye-troubles', *Britannia* 14 (1983), 1-12.

26. We can find no parallel in strength reports for the recording of the *ualentes*, but the reading is not in doubt. The numeral cannot be read in full, however, and the restoration is based entirely on arithmetical calculation.

27. We can see no clear sign of writing below this, and we might well expect the document to end at this point. The lower half of the second section of the leaf, on which lines 26-7 are written, is clearly blank, but there are *possible* traces of two or three lines below line 27.

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