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**The Epigraphic Habit in Decline: *A Study of Roman
Chester, York, and Colchester***

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
MA in Ancient History.**

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31ST July 2026



Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the decline of funerary commemoration in stone across three legionary sites in Roman Britain: Chester, York, and Colchester. It tests three established explanations for this decline, MacMullen's empire-wide 'epigraphic habit,' Woolf's model of monumental writing tied to civic institutions, and Meyer's argument that the extension of citizenship under the *Constitutio Antoniniana* of 212 CE removed the incentive for epigraphic display.

Using the *RIB* and *CSIR* catalogues, this study draws on personally compiled and photographed *corpora* for Chester, York, and Colchester, alongside prosopographical analysis of commemorators, to test each model against dated evidence. Chester's decline reflects an empire-wide military pattern, since the fortress never developed a civilian population able to sustain commemoration once army practice faded. Colchester's decline predates 212 CE entirely, since the habit had already died out once the army departed and the *colonia* settled. York 'epigraphic habit' persisted, because a civilian community grew alongside a garrison that never left, and its clearest post-212 CE evidence appears to support Meyer's theory rather than challenge it.

No single explanatory model accounts for the pattern across all three sites. Commemoration depended less on citizenship than on the survival of a community, military or civilian, with a continuing reason to mark its dead in stone, a conclusion reinforced by comparison with Cirta in North Africa, where an independent civic tradition sustained the habit long after the army's departure. This challenges assumptions about Romanisation. Roman customs did not spread, or last, the same way in every part of the same province.

Keywords: Epigraphic habit, Roman Britain, funerary commemoration, *Constitutio Antoniniana*, military communities, Chester, York, Colchester

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Abbreviations

RIB: *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*

CSIR: *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani*

1 Introduction

This dissertation focuses primarily on funerary epitaphs from three sites, Chester (Deva Victrix), Colchester (Camulodunum) and York (Eboracum). It argues that no single model fully accounts for this decline, and that commemoration depended less on the extension of citizenship than on whether a community, military or civilian, retained an independent tradition capable of sustaining the epigraphic habit once army practice changed. This also challenges Romanisation. A province could keep one Roman custom and drop another. The decline of the 'epigraphic habit' across the Roman world, the widespread practice of recording public, religious and funerary life in stone, has resulted in several competing explanations, each built primarily on civilian evidence from the Mediterranean and from Gaulish contexts. Ramsay MacMullen identified the broad chronological pattern, a rise across the first and second centuries followed by a sharp fall from the mid-third century onward and attributed it to a 'sense of audience.'¹ Greg Woolf tied the habit instead to the spread of Roman civic institutions.² Elizabeth Meyer offered a more specific explanation, that the extension of citizenship under the *Constitutio Antoniniana* of 212 CE removed the incentive to advertise Roman status in stone.³ None of these theories has been tested rigorously against the distinctive military communities of Roman Britain.

The dissertation is structured as follows: Chapter 2 reviews the existing scholarship on the epigraphic habit, situating MacMullen, Woolf, and Meyer's theories alongside more recent work on family, gender, and material culture, and identifying where Roman British military

¹ Ramsay MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire," *The American Journal of Philology* 103, no. 3 (Autumn 1982): 233–246.

² Greg Woolf, "Monumental Writing and the Expansion of Roman Society in the Early Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies* 86 (1996): 22–39.

³ E.A. Meyer, "Explaining the Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire: The Evidence of Epitaphs," *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990): 74–96.

evidence remains under-theorised. Chapter 3 establishes Chester as the primary case study, a purely military fortress whose funerary *corpus*, the largest surviving collection of Roman tombstones in Britain,⁴ reflects a habit carried almost entirely by the army and its dependents. Chapter 4 turns to York and Colchester as a comparative pair, structured thematically rather than site by site. Colchester, a legionary base turned veteran *colonia*, offers the clearest test of Meyer's theory. York, both fortress and *colonia*, shows a civilian population that grew alongside, rather than after, its garrison.

This study is confined to the first to third centuries CE. It does not examine funerary evidence before the first century CE, for which there is no epigraphic testimony in Britain, nor does it extend into the sub-Roman or early Christian period, such as the fourth-century Carlisle epitaph of Flavius Antigonus Papias (RIB 955). The discussion is further limited to the funerary inscriptions from Chester, York and Colchester catalogued in *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain* (RIB) and the sculptural evidence published in the *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani* (CSIR).

2.Literature Review and Methodological Outline

2.1 The Epigraphic Habit in Romano-British towns

⁴ R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1965).

The dramatic decline of inscribed funerary monuments in the third century CE represents a significant cultural transformation in the Roman Empire, yet scholarly explanations remain contested and underexamined in military contexts. While MacMullen's 'sense of audience' and identification of the chronological pattern, Woolf's regional variations, and Meyer's theory of universal citizenship offer useful frameworks, these derive primarily from civilian urban centres in Mediterranean provinces. Their pertinence to the distinctive commemorative cultures of Romano-British fortress towns, shaped by military presence, ethnic variety, and group identities, has not been thoroughly examined, a gap that this research seeks to address. Mullen's *Latin Now* data confirms the scale of this gap, showing that in Britain the epigraphic habit was predominantly military in character, with the civilian population never fully adopting the practice.⁵ Funerary inscriptions form only part of the wider epigraphic record at these sites. At Chester, funerary texts account for roughly 68 per cent of the relevant corpus, against 18 per cent religious dedications. At York and Colchester, by contrast, religious dedications are proportionally larger than funerary texts, at 48 and 56 per cent respectively, against 41 and 32 per cent funerary.⁶ The reasons behind this are not explored here, and a full comparative analysis of funerary against religious, honorific, and administrative epigraphy across all three sites lies beyond the scope of this dissertation, which focuses specifically on funerary commemoration.

This review critically evaluates existing scholarship on the epigraphic habit and identifies how theoretical frameworks both shed light on and obscure the unique processes visible at Chester, York, and Colchester.

⁵ Mullen, Alex. "Exploring Life and Languages." In *Latinization, Local Languages, and Literacies in the Roman West*, edited by Alex Mullen and Andreas Willi, 1-42. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024.

⁶ Collingwood and R.P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*.

2.2 MacMullen and the 'Epigraphic Habit'

MacMullen's pioneering work '*The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire*' established that Latin inscriptions increased dramatically during the first and second centuries CE before declining sharply from the mid-third century onwards.⁷ His key insight was that this pattern could not be explained by demographic or economic factors alone but by a 'sense of audience' in which communities wished to express identity and preserve memory.⁸ His *corpus*, drawn predominantly from urban Mediterranean and Egyptian contexts, conflates civilian and military epigraphy despite their fundamentally different production contexts.⁹ Military epitaphs emerged from institutional structures, burial clubs, regimental organisations and concentrated populations of literate stoneworkers that operated independently of the urban civic frameworks (something which MacMullen emphasised). Yet his statistical approach, while valuable for identifying broad patterns, cannot capture the differences between distinct commemorative contexts. At Chester, for example, RIB 503 records Publius Rustius Crescens, a soldier of the *Legio XX Valeria Victrix*, commemorated by his heir Groma. The use of a single name strongly suggests that Groma was either enslaved or a freeperson, pointing to commemorative relationships shaped by household dependency or testamentary arrangements rather than formal kinship.¹⁰ By contrast, RIB 559 records the freedman Etacontius, whose patron Gaius Asurius Fortis commissioned his epitaph.¹¹ In this case, commemoration reflects a hierarchical patron-client relationship characteristic of civilian society in which the act of dedication

⁷ Ramsey MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire," *The American Journal of Philology* 103, no. 3 (Autumn 1982): 233.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 243-246.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 239; For military epigraphy in Britain and its distinctive institutional context, see Lawrence Keppies, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions* (Routledge, 2002). 91-108.

¹⁰ Collingwood and Wright, *RIB* 503.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, *RIB* 505.

publicly reinforces social status and delegation. The distinction between a soldier commemorated by an heir and a freedman civilian commemorated by a patron illustrates how military epitaphs emerged from different social structures and commemorative obligations than those governing civilian funerary practice. Despite its foundational importance, MacMullen's model does not resolve whether the 'epigraphic habit' constituted a single, unified practice or a range of socially differentiated commemorative behaviours shaped by contexts.

2.3 Woolf and Monumental Writing

Moving to the 1990s, Greg Woolf's concept of 'monumental writing' offered important refinements to the notion of the 'epigraphic habit' by demonstrating that epigraphic practices were adopted at varying rates depending on local circumstances.¹² He argued that inscriptions flourished only where Roman administrative structures provided both resources and social incentives for commemoration, challenging simplistic Romanization narratives that assumed uniform cultural change.¹³ Yet Woolf's framework, like MacMullen's, focuses mainly on civilian towns in Gaul, Spain and North Africa.¹⁴ He ties the rise of monumental epigraphy to civic institutions and elite euergetism, indicating that inscriptions flourished most readily in communities where Roman administrative and social structures had taken firm root.¹⁵

2.4 Military Contexts and Pearce.

Military fortresses, by contrast, operated under different logics: commemoration was embedded in regimental structures rather than civic competition, and literacy was functionally necessary rather than an elite cultural marker. As Pearce has demonstrated in his study of Roman-British funerary monuments, epitaphs were socially embedded acts of commemoration shaped by local communities and institutional settings rather than expressions of civic solidarity alone, with military contexts producing distinctive epigraphic practices.¹⁶ Woolf's emphasis on urbanism as a prerequisite for epigraphic production,

¹² Woolf, "Monumental Writing," 22-39.

¹³ Ibid., 35-38.

¹⁴ Ibid., 24; 35-37.

¹⁵ Ibid., 35.

¹⁶ Pearce, J., "Archaeology and Writing in the Roman World," in *Materialising the Roman Empire*, ed. Jeremy Tanner and Andrew Gardner (London: UCL Press, 2024), 49, 67; for a recent quantitative demonstration of regional variation in epitaphic practice, see Lynne Bennett, *Global Patterns of Commemoration in Roman Epitaphs: A Quantitative Spatial Analysis* (PhD diss., University of Kent, 2020), chs. 7–8. Bennett's analysis

however, tends to obscure how towns with dual military and civilian populations, such as Chester, York, and Colchester (originally founded as fortresses), developed distinctive commemorative cultures that challenge his theory.¹⁷

2.5 Citizenship, Religion, and Military Self-Presentation

In addition to considering geographic and socio-political context, it is also important to engage with legal dynamics as well. Elizabeth Meyer argues that the *Constitutio Antoniniana* of 212 CE, by extending citizenship to nearly all free inhabitants of the empire, diminished the exclusivity that had motivated elite memorialisation, so that provincials lost interest in publicly displaying legal status and Roman identity through epitaphs, contributing to a decline in both the number and prominence of inscriptions¹⁸ This is an elegant thesis that shifts focus from crisis narratives to cultural transformation. Nonetheless, Meyer's framework proves problematic in military contexts, where the distinctive social and hierarchical structures of army life complicate assumptions derived from civilian cultural practices.¹⁹

First As Lavan has demonstrated, soldiers had for a long time received citizenship through military service; unlike civilian *peregrini*, legionaries and many auxiliaries often already possessed citizenship well before 212 CE, with between 0.9 and 1.6 million receiving it between 14 CE and 212 CE.²⁰ Furthermore, in Chester alone,

shows that funerary commemoration varied significantly between regions and communities, with frontier and military-influenced contexts, including sites such as Carnuntum and other military settlements, exhibiting distinctive epigraphic practices. These include preferences for formulae such as *hic situs est* and *bene merenti*, a stronger emphasis on the physical location of the body, longer inscription lengths, and higher rates of abbreviation, distinguishing military-influenced traditions from the civic models of monumental writing more typical of major urban centres.

¹⁷ Examples of Chester, York and Colchester drawn from the *RIB*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ M. Lavan, *Legionary Citizenship and Military Service* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 14-18.

the RIB records numerous epitaphs specifying the *tribus* of a legionary, indicating his citizenship.²¹ Second, Meyer assumes that epitaphs primarily address external audiences who judged legal status, thereby underestimating other functions, such as the contention that epitaphs hold religious connotation.²² Hope argues tombstones addressed the *Dis Manes* to maintain pietas independently of status display.²² Cox similarly notes the widespread 'D M' formula as evidence of belief in the shades of the dead, and Tomlin reads the dative *Dis Manibus* as a genuine religious invocation recurring across Romano-British epitaphs.²³ In Chester, the RIB records roughly 22 *D M* inscriptions out of 95 epitaphs (23 per cent), against 21 at York and 3 at Colchester.²⁴ Taken together, the uneven use of the *D(is) M(anibus)* formula across Chester, York and Colchester, alternatives, such as *Hic Situs Est*, suggest that funerary commemoration followed multiple local conventions rather than a single standard practice, shaped by chronology and differing social or familial priorities.²⁵

For soldiers, monuments, such as epitaphs, also documented military careers, advertised *virtus* and maintained regimental memory, functions that the universalisation of citizenship should not have affected. Meyer's, MacMullen's and Woolf's theories account for some aspects of the decline in inscriptions, but they do not fully explain why at Chester, York and Colchester, military communities stopped producing inscriptions even though their organisational structures and economic resources remained in place. Coulston's analysis of military identity within the Roman army aligns with MacMullen's 'Sense of Audience' theory.

²¹ Collingwood and Wright, RIB, Chester entries.

²² Valerie M. Hope, *Roman Death: The Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome* (London: Continuum, 2009), 167-177.

²³ J. Cox, *Studies in Roman Epigraphy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 101-5; R. Tomlin, *Roman Inscriptions in Britain* (London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 1988), 55-57.

²⁴ R.G. Collingwood and R.P Wright, RIB, Vol 1, entries for Chester, York, and Colchester.

²⁵ For the use of formulae such as *Hic Situs Est* used alongside or independently of the *D (is) M (anibus)* invocations in Romano British epitaphs, see RIB, 200, 201, 695.

Coulston argues that the limited recognition afforded to soldiers within the Roman elite system prompted them to engage in ostentatious displays when commemorating their life's work through inscriptions.²⁶ This applied not only to ordinary soldiers but also to centurions, whose higher rank within the army did not necessarily grant them elite status beyond it.²⁷ Throughout the many of the cohorts then, the desire for acknowledgement and remembrance motivated many soldiers to acquire skills in sculpting, enabling them to craft their own monuments and epitaphs.²⁸ In his article 'Commemorating the dead in Roman Britain', John Pearce builds on MacMullen's 'Sense of audience' theory by showing that tombstones in Roman Britain were not just records of the dead but deliberate acts of self-presentation.²⁹ While MacMullen highlighted inscriptions as displays of status, Pearce combines text, sculpture and placement to show how soldiers and civilians competed to be remembered.³⁰ He emphasizes that tombstones were carefully positioned alongside roads, in garrisons, and towns to be seen. Even in a province often though epigraphically limited, Pearce reveals a rich, socially complex culture of commemoration. Carroll's 'Vox tua nempe mea est' further exposes limitations in MacMullen's argument. Although her discussion of 'speaking stones', inscriptions that address the dead, might at first seem to support his audience-focused mode, she shows that such practiced were far from universal.³¹ In Britain only one 'speaking' tombstone has been found, suggesting that

²⁶ J.C. Coulston, "Military Identity and Personal Self-Identity in the Roman Army," in *Roman Rule and Civic Life: Local and Regional Perspectives*, ed Luuk de Ligt, Emily A. Hemelrijk, and H.W. Singor (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 2004), 135.

²⁷ L.A. Hughes, "Centurions at Amiternum: Notes on the Apisius Family," *Phoenix* 59, no. 1 (2005): 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 150.

²⁹ John Pearce, "Commemorating the Dead in Roman Britain: Monuments and Their Setting," in *Proceedings of the 18th International Congress of Classical Archaeology: Centro y periferia en el mundo clásico*, ed. J. M. Álvarez, T. Nogales, and I. Rodà (Mérida: Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, 2015), 1209–12.

³⁰ MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit," 233-26; Pearce, "Commemorating the Dead," 1209-12.

³¹ Maureen Carroll, "Vox tua nempe mea est: Dialogues with the Dead in Roman Funerary Commemoration," *Accordia Research Papers* 11 (2008): 37–80. Carroll demonstrates that 'speaking stones' represent a particular

this practice was rare in this province compared to regions like Italy and Spain, where they massed 415 ‘speaking’ tombstones between them.³² This points to significant regional differences in commemorating the dead and the use of epigraphic texts, offering a more nuanced view of MacMullen’s argument.

Indeed, recent scholarship emphasises that epigraphic practice was never uniform but varied by community and function. Although civilian epitaphs are also attested at Chester, more so at York and Colchester, the overall *corpus*, especially at Chester, remains heavily weighted toward military personnel, suggesting that commemorative practice was significantly influenced by the institutional presence of the army, even where the deceased were not themselves soldiers. Locally conditioned epigraphic communities, demonstrate that monumental writing could flourish outside the urban frameworks central to Woolf’s model.

2.6 Identity, Mobility, and Multiple Audiences

Epitaphs, in Chester and York, frequently record origins, tribal affiliation and relationships with heirs and commemorators from various provinces. Ian Haynes in his study on military communities argues that fortress towns, like Chester and York were cosmopolitan spaces where multiple identities intersected and shaped local commemorative practices, thus complicating the notion of ‘monolithic Roman’ identity.³³ As such, for the soldiers in these forts, tombstones may have addressed multiple audiences simultaneously; local

funerary convention rather than a standard feature of Roman epitaphs, and that commemorative engagement with an audience could be achieved through form, placement, and formula as well as through direct address.

³² Ibid., 38.

³³ Ian Haynes, “Identity and Military Community in Roman Britain,” in the *Oxford Handbook of Roman Britain*, ed. Martin Millett, Louise Revell, and Alison Moore (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 448-463.

communities, fellow soldiers, the *Dis Manes*, and perhaps imagined audiences in their distant homeland.

If, as Saller and Shaw argue in their 1984 paper 'Tombstones and Roman Family Relations in the Principate: Civilians, Soldiers and Slaves', epitaphs primarily functioned to articulate and preserve intimate networks of obligation, especially linking spouses, parents, children, and close kin, then commemorated behaviour cannot be reduced to the display of legal status alone.³⁴ Saller and Shaw's analysis of over ten thousand inscriptions confirms the nuclear family as the dominant focus of commemoration in both spheres,³⁵ and Hope shows tombstones served as durable anchors of familial memory across distance and mobility, motivations the universalisation of citizenship in 212 CE cannot explain away.³⁶

2.7 Marriage, Women, and Military Households

While Saller, Shaw and Hope emphasise kinship and memory, Sara Phang examines soldiers' actual capacity to form such relationships during service.³⁷ Phang argues marriage rates rose during the second and third centuries, attributing this to the lifting of the marriage ban under Severus in 197 CE, increased pay, and more settled service; those who died without ties instead relied on military networks for social support.³⁸

Joanne Ball's study of Chester and York challenges earlier assumptions that women were epigraphically marginal in military contexts, showing them consistently present as commemorators and subjects of dedication, their visibility mediated through kinship and

³⁴ Richard P. Saller and Brent D. Shaw, "Tombstones and Roman Family Relations in the Principate: Civilians, Soldiers and Slaves," *Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984): 124-56, at 133-45.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 124-126.

³⁶ Hope 'Roman Death', 31-39; 167-177.

³⁷ Sara E. Phang, *The Marriage of Roman Soldiers (13 B.C.-A.D.235)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 152.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 145.

household memory rather than military identity directly.³⁹ Allason-Jones's research on women in Roman Britain similarly evidences a sustained female presence within and around forts, challenging portrayals of military settlements as exclusively masculine spaces.⁴⁰

2.8 Romanisation, Globalisation, and Creolisation

The study of funerary epigraphy must also be situated within broader historiographical shifts away from Romanisation theory. Early interpretations, particularly those of Haverfield, treated inscriptions as evidence of cultural assimilation and civilising change.⁴¹ While Haverfield's cataloguing remains indispensable, his teleological framework has been widely critiqued. Scholars such as Mattingly and Hingley argue that traditional Romanisation models overlook provincial agency and diversity, and they instead promote approaches that focus on negotiation, power dynamics, and local creativity.⁴²

Globalisation perspectives further emphasise connectivity, mobility, and hybridisation across imperial networks, a framework especially pertinent to military environments characterised by population movement.⁴³ Applied to Colchester, York and more specifically Chester this perspective suggests that the adoption and eventual decline of tombstones reflect changing

³⁹ Joanne E. Ball, "The (In)visibility of Women in Stone-Cut Personal Inscriptions from Fortresses in Roman Britain: Epigraphic Absence, or Earlier Scholarship Bias?" in *Current Approaches to Roman Frontiers: Proceedings of the 25th International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies 1*, ed. Harry van Enckevort, Mark Driessen, Erik Graafstal, Tom Hazenberg, Tatiana Ivleva, and Carol van Driel-Murray (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2024), 52–54.

⁴⁰ Lindsay Allason-Jones, *Women in Roman Britain*, 2nd ed. (London: British Museum Press, 2005), 472.

⁴¹ F. Haverfield, *Catalogue of the Roman Inscribed and Sculptured Stones in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester* (Chester: Chester Archaeological Society, 1900); F. Haverfield, *The Romanization of Roman Britain*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915).

⁴² Richard Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture: Unit, Diversity and Empire* (London: Routledge, 2005), 3–10; David J. Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire* (London: Penguin, 2007), 4–12.

⁴³ Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture*, 5–14; Ian P. Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces: The Roman Auxilia and the Making of Provincial Society from Augustus to the Severans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3–6.

local priorities within veteran, military communities and adjacent civic communities rather than a uniform process of cultural assimilation.

This emphasis on local agency has been developed further through 'bottom up' approaches to Roman cultural change, which foreground how everyday practices were shaped within provincial communities rather than imposed from above.⁴⁴ Jane Webster's concept of creolisation captures this dynamic particularly well, arguing that provincial communities generated new cultural forms through the creative hybridisation of Roman and indigenous practices, offering a 'bottom up' perspective on post-conquest identity. Military tombstones, which combine standardised Latin formulae with local iconography, religious references, and naming traditions, exemplify such hybridisation.⁴⁵ Within the framework of creolization, the decline of epigraphy may not signify a complete disengagement from Roman culture but rather reflect a shift in how provincial communities negotiated and expressed their identities and memories through material culture.⁴⁶ Haeussler and Elizabeth Webster take this bottom-up approach further still, coining the term 'creolage' for cultural change driven by the everyday experiences, expectations, and social pressure individuals faced in their own local settings, rather than a change imposed uniformly across the empire.⁴⁷

This does not mean the theory of Romanisation is not valid. The empire clearly did become more Roman over time. Romanisation and creolage may simply describe the same process at different scales: the empire changing, while individuals and communities negotiated that change locally, in their own way. The 'epigraphic habit' at Chester, York, and Colchester

⁴⁴ Ralph Haeussler and Elizabeth Webster, "Creolage. A Bottom-Up Approach to Cultural Change in Roman Times," *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal* 3, no.1 (2020): 2.

⁴⁵ Jane Webster, "Creolizing the Roman Provinces," *American Journal of Archaeology* 105, no. 2 (2001): 209-225.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 209; Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power and Identity*, 6-15.

⁴⁷ Haeussler and Webster, "Creolage" 16-18.

shows this well. Soldiers came from across the empire yet brought with them this Roman institutional practice. That its origin was imperial does not make its adoption any less a ‘bottom-up’ act, since it was practised, adapted, and eventually abandoned according to local circumstance at each site.

2.9 Afterlives of Monuments

Material-culture approaches have also reshaped the study of epigraphy by foregrounding the afterlives of monument. Clay’s analysis of reused tombstones on Chester’s north wall treats inscriptions as objects with biographies rather than static texts, emphasising patterns of breakage, defacement, and redeployment.⁴⁸ Whether interpreted as pragmatic re-use or memory manipulation (*damnatio memoriae*), such practices demonstrate that epigraphic decline did not entail the disappearance of monuments themselves; while inscribed commemoration diminished, the stones remained materially active.⁴⁹ This complicates linear narratives of epigraphic cessation by revealing continuity in material engagement even where and when inscription ceased.

2.10 Third-Century Change and Regional Context

Finally, debates surrounding the so-called third-century crisis have increasingly emphasized regional variation and gradual transformations in institutions and communities, challenging traditional explanations that link epigraphic decline solely to economic contraction and political instability.⁵⁰ Archaeological evidence from Chester suggests continued investment in fortifications and infrastructure well into the third century, whilst Ottaway suggests the

⁴⁸ Cheryl Clay, “Iconoclasm in Roman Chester: The Significance of the Mutilated Tombstones from the North Wall,” *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 157, no. 1 (2004): 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁰ Christian Witschel, “Re-Evaluating the Roman West in the 3rd c. A.D.,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 17 (2004): 251-281.

situation in York was slightly more uncertain than that of Chester.⁵¹ Nonetheless, he does not suggest the economy was in strife, merely that it may become more self-sufficient. This, however, challenges interpretations that explain reduced epigraphic output purely in terms of economic capacity. Indeed, Mason notes that many tombstones recovered in Chester date predominantly to the third century, suggesting continued commemorative activity even during the supposed period of decline.⁵² The coincidence of changing epigraphic patterns with shifts in burial practices, monument reuse, and spatial organisation instead points toward wider reconfigurations in how memory, space, and social priorities were structured and expressed.⁵³ Hanson's recent work adds a further dimension here. He argues that the number of inscriptions at a site relates to its population, though growing more slowly than population itself, and that this reflects the role of inscriptions as a form of information infrastructure rather than simply a reflection of wealth. He does not distinguish between different kinds of inscription, votive, funerary, or otherwise, treating them as one basic phenomenon, and states this lies beyond the scope of his article. If votive and funerary material do not in fact scale at the same rate, his combined figure may mask two different patterns rather than reveal one, a possibility he himself raises in his conclusion, where he suggests that epitaphs and building inscriptions might increase at different rates.⁵⁴

2.11 Research Gap and Approach

The concepts employed in this dissertation come directly from the debates outlined above, but they are applied more specifically and comparatively to the funerary inscriptions

⁵¹ David J. P. Mason, *The City of Eagles: The Archaeology of Roman Chester* (Stroud: Tempus, 2001), 161-167. Patrick Ottaway, *Roman York* (Stroud: Tempus/English Heritage, 2004), 131-132.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 166.

⁵³ Clay, *Iconoclasm in Roman Chester*, 12.

⁵⁴ J.W. Hanson, "Cities, Information, and the Epigraphic Habit: Re-evaluating the Links between THE Numbers of Inscriptions and the Sizes and the Sites," *Journal of Urban Archaeology* 4 (2021): 137-152, at 140, 150.

of Chester, York, Colchester. This analysis is based mainly on the Roman Inscriptions of Britain database, which catalogue tombstones from all three sites. Rather than adopting a single explanatory model, this study draws on the ‘epigraphic habit’, critiques of Romanisation, photographic analysis, family and gender approaches to commemorations and material culture perspectives to assess how and why tombstone production declined within Romano-British military communities.

MacMullen’s concept of the ‘epigraphic habit’ is the starting point, it identifies a broad imperial pattern of growth and decline in inscription production, and its focus on a ‘sense of audience’ remains valuable in understanding funerary monuments as public acts of visibility. Yet, as the literature review demonstrates this model risks regional does not fully account for regional or institutional differences. This dissertation will draw on the ‘epigraphic habit’ as a heuristic framework against which the evidence from Chester, York and Colchester can be tested.

Hanson's model has, however, barely been tested against evidence of this kind. He notes that ‘some’ of his inscriptions come from religious and military sites, including frontier installations such as Hadrian's Wall, but treats these as a minor part of an overwhelmingly civilian, urban dataset drawn mainly from Italy and the western provinces.⁵⁵ Since Mullen's data confirms that Britain's epigraphic habit was predominantly military,⁵⁶ Hanson's population-scaling model may hold well for the civilian towns it was built on, while saying little about a province his data barely covers. The comparative funerary evidence from Chester, York and Colchester tests his model in exactly the context it has so far overlooked.

⁵⁵ Hanson, “Cities, Information, and the Epigraphic Habit,” 140.

⁵⁶ Mullen, “Exploring Life and Languages,” 1-42.

Greg Woolf's emphasis on urbanism and civic institutions further informs this approach. If monumental writing flourished most readily in towns with established magistracies and elite competition, then fortress communities such as Chester and hybrid military civic centres such as York, offer an important testing ground. The funerary inscriptions of these sites were shaped not primarily by civic euergetism but by the commemorative practices of military communities; regimental identity and household relationships formed within garrison environments.

Simultaneously, critiques of traditional Romanisation theory, particularly those advanced by Mattingly and Hingley, add to the interpretative framework adopted here. Rather than assuming a unidirectional process of cultural assimilation, this study approaches military communities as socially complex environments in which identities were negotiated with local and institutional structures.

Family and gender scholarship further refines this perspective. Studies by Saller and Shaw, Hope, Ball and Allason-Jones demonstrate that tombstones functioned not merely as displays of legal status but as durable expressions of kinship, obligation and mourning. In this dissertation, prosopographical analysis of commemorators and relationships is used to identify patterns of commemoration that go beyond rank and legal status alone.

This study also incorporates material-culture perspective. As discussed above, the focus is on the biography of tombstones; what happened after their creation and these later histories illuminate the material, spatial and archaeological context in which inscriptions functioned. The reuse of tombstones within Chester's later defensive north wall demonstrates that the epigraphic record was shaped by processes of displacement and redeployment.

The apparent decline of inscription must therefore be assessed alongside the continued material engagement with stone monuments.

Methodologically, this dissertation employs a comparative structure. Chester constitutes the primary case study and forms the bulk of the analysis, owing to its sustained identity as a legionary fortress and the substantial corpus of inscriptions associated not only with the *Legio XX Valeria Victrix* but also with the *Legio II Adiutrix*, auxiliaries and civilians. York and Colchester are treated as a shared comparative chapter. York, as both fortress and colonia, offers insight into a hybrid administrative-military environment, while Colchester illustrates the development from early fortress to veteran *colonia*.⁵⁷

Funerary monuments are examined in terms of formulae, material, iconography, dedicatory relationships, and findspots. Broad patterns are considered alongside close analysis of individual monuments, showing how different commemorative practices appear across the *corpus*.

⁵⁷ For full discussion and citations of these scholars, see 2.2-2.14 above.

Chapter 3

Deva Victrix (Chester): Military Identity and the Epigraphic Habit

3.1 Introduction

As the preceding theoretical and methodological discussion has made clear, this dissertation argues that the epigraphic habit followed the army into Britain, yet each of the three sites examined here, Chester, York and Colchester, adapted and responded to that habit differently. There is no doubt that the epigraphic habit tapered off across all three by the third century CE, but as the following chapters will show, there are challenges in explaining why this happened in the same way at every site. Hanson's recent work suggests that inscription numbers relate to the size of a settlement, so a fortress, a *colonia* and a provincial capital might be expected to produce different amounts of commemoration simply because of their different populations, before considering any social or military cause.⁵⁸ Chester, the largest single *corpus* examined in this study, is the first test of whether that variation can be explained by its military character, or whether population size alone accounts for some of it.

Chester, a strategic Roman outpost on the frontier of what is now the Welsh border, has seen much of its archaeological remains either repurposed for repairing walls or buried beneath the modern city.⁵⁹ Ninety-three inscribed tombstones have been excavated from the site,⁶⁰ representing the single largest collection of Roman funerary monuments from any

⁵⁸ Hanson, "Cities, Information, and the Epigraphic Habit," 140.

⁵⁹ W. Thompson Watkin, "The Roman Inscriptions Discovered at Chester during the First Repairs to the North Wall in 1887," *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* (1887): 12; David J. P. Mason, *Roman Chester: Fortresses at the Edge of the Roman World* (Stroud: The History Press, 2012), 11.

⁶⁰ R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright, *RIB*, Vol 1.

site in Britain.⁶¹ These tombstones, recovered predominantly from the north wall of the fortress where they had been reused as building material, and rediscovered during Victorian repairs in 1887, hold a wealth of evidence about soldiers, families, civilians, freedmen and slaves who lived and died at Deva Victrix over three centuries of continuous occupation.⁶²



Figure 1: The north wall at Chester, the lower courses of which are Roman. Most of Chester's tombstones were recovered from this wall during Victorian repairs in 1887: Source: Author's own.

Britain was a province heavily defined by its military presence. As Mullen has recently confirmed, its epigraphic habit was largely military in character, with the local populations never fully adopting the practice of funerary commemoration in stone.⁶³ Chester, established in the 70s by the *II Legio Adiutrix Pia Fidelis* and subsequently by the *XX Legio Valeria Victrix*, was one of the three permanent legionary fortresses in Britain and offers an ideal opportunity to examine this pattern in detail.⁶⁴

This chapter, therefore, will begin by examining the tombstones of the *II Legio Adiutrix*, the earliest garrison at Chester, before moving on to the *XX Legio Valeria Victrix*. It will consider

⁶¹ Ball, "The (In)visibility of Women," 49–54. Ball records 95 funerary inscriptions at Chester, slightly more than RIB's 93. This probably comes down to her cutoff date of 1939, or her inclusion of a few more fragmentary stones.

⁶² Watkin, "The Roman Inscriptions Discovered at Chester" 12.

⁶³ Mullen, "Exploring Life and Languages," 21.

⁶⁴ D. J. P. Mason, *The Foundation of the Legionary Fortress: Deva, The Flavians and the Imperial Symbolism* (Chester: Chester City Council, 2000), 33; Mason, *Roman Chester*, 44-94.

the evidence of how these tombstones were produced and examine the *ascia* symbol, an axe or *adze* shape symbol cut often near the *D M* formula, found on a small number of Chester tombstones. This chapter will then look beyond the purely military record to consider what the corpus reveals about family, women, civilians, slaves and freedmen within the garrison community. Throughout, it addresses the central question of this study: why did the production of funerary monuments at Chester decline? The evidence suggests that this decline was not unique to Chester, but part of a wider, empire-wide decline in the epigraphic habit. Chester does not stand alone in this study. The findings from Chester will be compared with the epigraphic record of York and Colchester in the following chapter, asking whether the patterns identified here reflect broader trends or something more specific to the character of *Deva Victrix*.

3.2 II *Legio Adiutrix Pia Fidelis*

The tombstones of the Second Legion *Adiutrix Pia Fidelis* provide some of the earliest epigraphic evidence from Chester. Recovered predominantly from the west part of the north wall, they offer a glimpse into the first garrison to occupy *Deva Victrix* before the legion's transfer to the Danube around 87 CE. Several record soldiers from the Claudian voting tribe, with a notable concentration originating from *Aprus*, identified by Mason as a Claudian colony in Thrace.⁶⁵

The tombstones, however, only give us a very fragmented picture. What they do show is that several soldiers recorded at Chester belonged to the Claudian voting tribe, originating from inland towns such as *Aprus* in Thrace- *Celea* in Noricum and *Savaria*-identified in the RIB as

⁶⁵ Mason *Roman Chester*, 60.

Claudian colony in Pannonia Superior-places far removed from any naval tradition.⁶⁶ Yet, the voting tribe evidence on their tombstones suggests that by the time these soldiers were commemorated in Chester that they were citizens. Holder notes, that the legion recruited from across other parts of the empire to allow for the legion to be at full force.⁶⁷ The tombstones do not show Ravenna marines; they show us what the legion had become during their years in Chester from around 74-75 CE-87 CE.⁶⁸

The tombstone of Gaius Iuventius Capito (RIB 476), shown in Figure 2, is a good illustration of what survives from the *II Legio Adiutrix* corpus. Found in the west part of the north wall, it records a soldier from Aprus in Thrace, aged forty, with seven or seventeen years of service. Despite being heavily worn the inscription remains partially readable, which is a testament to the durability of the local sandstone. What is also notable is that no family member is named as commissioner. This is a pattern across many of the *II Legio Adiutrix* tombstones, where commissioners are either unnamed or simply described as heirs. The legion had only recently arrived at Chester in the 70s CE and family networks around the fortress were not yet established. It is possible that the military burial club, the collegium, played a role here, providing funds for funerary monuments for soldiers who had no family nearby to commemorate them.⁶⁹ If so, it may explain why few family commissioners appear on the earliest tombstones from Chester.

⁶⁶ RIB 479, 480. The RIB commentary identifies Savaria as a Claudian colony in Pannonia Superior, modern day Szombathely in Hungary; P. A. Holder, *The Roman Army in Britain* (London: Batsford, 1982), 47; Mason, *Roman Chester*, 47; Mason tells us that the Second Legion *Adiutrix* were primarily marines from the Ravenna fleet, rewarded with full legionary status and Roman citizenship by Vespasian for their loyalty during his campaign against Vitellius in 69 CE, hence the name *pia fidelis* being loyal and faithful; Holder, *The Roman Army*, 47.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 47.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 47.

⁶⁹ Phang, *"The Marriage of Roman Soldiers"*, 165-166.



Figure 2: Line drawing by Baty (1923) from the tombstone of Gaius Iuventus Capito of the *II Legio Adiutrix*: RIB ONLINE.

Birley's analysis of the Chester inscriptions reveals much that the tombstones alone do not. His examination of RIB 481, 482 and 483, each recording soldiers who served thirteen years, led him to suggest that all three may have been casualties of Agricola's operations beyond the Firth of Forth in 83CE.⁷⁰ He also identified the soldier from RIB 482, as coming from *Augusta Praetoria* in northern Italy, confirming him as one of the recruits enrolled around 70 CE, following the discharge of many marines from service.⁷¹ What Birley's analysis reveals is that even the most fragmentary inscription can provide valuable context. The condition of these tombstones, however, varies considerably. Some are partial or broken, others retain traces of decoration including rosettes, half-moons and palm-leaf motifs. None of the *II Legio Adiutrix* tombstones carries the *ascia* symbol. While scholars debate its specific meaning, the idea that its presence marks an unfinished stone, still under the mason's hand, is unlikely to be correct. RIB 491 is the only certain example from Britain.

⁷⁰ Eric Birley, "Some Military Inscriptions from Chester (Deva)," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 64 (1986): 205. Tacitus provides the principal primary source account of Agricola's northern campaigns in Britain, recording that at the Battle of Mons Graupius alone some 10,000 of the enemy fell and 360 Romans were lost. This is the battle Birley is referring to above, near the Firth of Forth. Tacitus, *Agricola*, trans. Harold Mattingly, rev. S. A. Handford (London: Penguin Classics, 1970), 25.

⁷¹ Birley, "Some Military Inscriptions," 205; Mason, *Roman Chester*, 47.

Bennett's mapping of the formula across the whole empire found only 461 examples, almost all of them, 96 per cent, concentrated in Aquitania, Gallia Narbonensis and Lugdunensis, with more than half of Lugdunum's own epitaphs alone using it.⁷² This confirms that its absence at Chester reflects a genuinely regional, Gallic tradition, not an unfinished stone. If the symbol really meant 'unfinished,' far more Chester's tombstones would be expected to show it. Henig takes the absence itself as proof that these stones were finished and formally erected before the legion departed, but this reads too much into silence: absence of a rare symbol is not strong evidence either way.⁷³ Another possible explanation is that the absence among the *II Adiutrix* may come down to where the soldiers themselves were from. Those recorded from Aprus in Thrace and Celeia in Noricum came from regions outside the *ascia*'s known range, though Savaria sat in Pannonia, a province once bound up with Illyricum itself, so the picture is not entirely clean.⁷⁴ Whatever the reason for its absence, the damage these tombstones carry most likely came later, from their reuse in the wall, rather than being a sign that they were never completed.

There is not always a clear explanation for the damage found on these tombstones. Clay's argument of *damnatio memoriae* in the case of the Twentieth Legion is plausible, but so is the possibility that some damage occurred much later.⁷⁵ Watkin's original report of the 1887 repairs records that workmen were chiselling tombstones to refit them into the wall before anyone realised they were inscribed, meaning some of what we see today may not be

⁷² Lynne Bennett, "Global Patterns of Commemoration in Roman Epitaphs: A Quantitative Spatial Analysis of the Most Common Formulae" (PhD thesis, University of Kent, 2020), ch. 4.

⁷³ Martin Henig, *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani (CSIR)*, vol. I, fasc. 9, 25, 13.

⁷⁴ John Wilkes, *The Illyrians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 183–211.

⁷⁵ Clay, "Iconoclasm in Roman Chester", 4–12.

Roman damage at all.⁷⁶ It is also worth noting that the *II Legio Adiutrix* tombstones generally show less damage than those of the Twentieth Legion, which will be considered in the following section.

The distribution of the *II Legio Adiutrix* tombstones within the north wall is also revealing. Except for RIB 487, all were recovered from the west section, suggesting they were drawn from a specific cemetery zone to the west of the fortress. This concentration in the west, contrasted with the more mixed distribution of the *XXth Legio* across both east and west sections, and this may reflect different phases of wall construction or the proximity of different cemetery zones to specific parts of the fortress.⁷⁷

The *II Adiutrix corpus*, read as a whole, reflects a garrison still finding its feet at Chester: soldiers drawn from across the empire, memorials arranged through the *collegium* rather than family, and a body of evidence too sparse and too recently arrived to show traditions like the *ascia* that took root elsewhere.

⁷⁶ Watkin, "The Roman Inscriptions", 4; I. Matthews Jones, "Official Report on the Discoveries of Roman Remains at Chester during the First Repairs to the North Wall in 1887," *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* (1887): 4.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

3.3 The Twentieth Legion Valeria Victrix

The twenty-seven tombstones associated with the Twentieth Legion *Valeria Victrix* represent the largest single group within Chester's funerary *corpus*, accounting for just under a third of the ninety-three tombstones excavated from the site.⁷⁸ Unlike the Second Legion *Adiutrix*, whose presence at Chester was relatively brief, the Twentieth Legion occupied Deva Victrix from around 87 CE until the late third or early fourth century, they were a continuous presence for over two centuries.⁷⁹ Their tombstones therefore offer a much richer and more varied picture of commemorative practice within the garrison community. Through the careful reading of names, voting tribes and origins- a method known as prosopography, it is possible to examine the soldiers, families and civilians who formed part of the garrison community.

The voting tribe evidence from the Twentieth Legion, also reveals a striking diversity of origins. Unlike the Second Legion *Adiutrix*, where the Claudian tribe shows a notable concentration from Aprus, the Twentieth Legion displays no comparable clustering. Soldiers came from across the western empire, from Lugdunum in Gaul, Arelate in southern France, Emerita and Oia in Spain, Brixia and Cremona in northern Italy, and Celeia in the eastern Alps. This reflects what Haynes has identified as the cosmopolitan character typical of Romano-British fortress communities.⁸⁰ Birley's examination of RIB 509, the tombstone of a centurion of the Twentieth who had previously served in three other legions, *V Macedonia, VIII Augusta and II Augusta* illustrates the remarkable mobility of military

⁷⁸ RIB 489-516.

⁷⁹ Mason, *Roman Chester*, 216.

⁸⁰ Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 121-134.

careers across the empire, with soldiers moving between legions stationed in Dacia, Germany and Britain before ending their service in Chester.⁸¹

The tombstone of Marcus Aurelius Alexander (RIB 490), shown in Figure 6, illustrates just how diverse the Chester garrison had become by the third century. A camp prefect of the Twentieth Legion, he is described as a Syrian tribesman from Osroene in northern Mesopotamia, as far from Chester as the Roman world extended. He lived to seventy-two years, suggesting a long and distinguished military career that had taken him from the eastern fringes of the empire to the north-west frontier of Britain.⁸² What is also notable is that his tombstone carries no voting tribe, a pattern the RIB commentary associates with third century practice, when traditional markers of citizen status were becoming less meaningful following the extension of citizenship under the *Constitutio Antoniniana* of 212 CE. His tombstone may therefore represent one of the later commemorations in the Chester *corpus* and offers a glimpse into the garrison community at a point when the epigraphic tradition was already beginning to change.

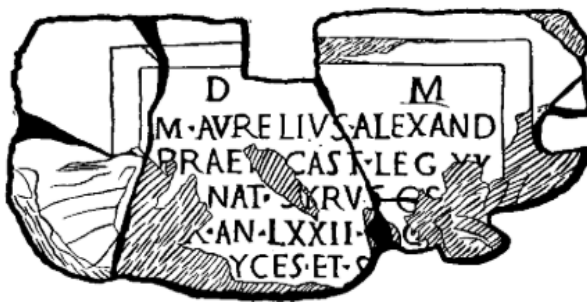


Figure 3: Tombstone of Marcus Aurelius Alexander (RIB 490), camp prefect of the Twentieth Legion.
Source: RIB Online

⁸¹ Birley, "Some Military Inscriptions," 201.

⁸² Mason, *Roman Chester*, 217.

Clay suggests that the defacement of the Twentieth Legion tombstones was a deliberate act of *damnatio memoriae*. While one case, RIB 521, is clearly defaced,⁸³ some other tombstones show a clear pattern of damage, faces, hands, standards and effigies seemed to be specifically targeted, while decorative elements such as spandrels and lintels were left largely intact. The tombstone of the standard bearer is another telling example; the spandrels protrude further than the main relief yet have survived undamaged, suggesting the figure was deliberately removed rather than incidentally damaged during reuse.⁸⁴

This study, however, argues that the wider destruction is better explained by the ready availability of suitable material for reuse than by any deliberate campaign against the legion's memory. Clay has studied this material closely, but her theory feels somewhat Romanticised: as she herself notes, tombstones of the *II Legio* were also built into the wall, evidence that burial grounds normally protected from disturbance were eventually exploited during later reconstruction regardless of unit or reputation.⁸⁵

⁸³ RIB 521; see the catalogue, Appendix A.

⁸⁴ Clay, "Iconoclasm" 5-6; Henig, *CSIR* 1.9, 80, 27.

⁸⁵ Clay, "Iconoclasm," 5.



Figure 4: Tombstone of a standard bearer (Henig CSIR I.9, no. 80), recovered from the north wall at Chester. The figure has been heavily damaged while the surrounding architectural frame survives largely intact — a pattern Clay identifies as evidence of deliberate defacement rather than incidental damage during reuse. Dated tentatively to the third century. Source: Henig, *Roman Sculpture from the Northwest Midlands*, CSIR I.9, Plate 25.

The tombstone of the imaginifer Aurelius Diogenes RIB 521 tells a similar story, he is headless, his clothes cut away and the imperial effigy on his standard chiselled out.⁸⁶

Clay connects this pattern of deliberate defacement to the Twentieth Legion's involvement in the usurpation of Carausius, who rebelled against the emperor Maximian in 286 CE.

The XX *Legio* appears on coins of Carausius, and we see the epigraphic evidence ceasing from 251 CE as well as its disappearance from the *Notitia Dignitatum*, suggesting it was disbanded in the aftermath of the suppression of Carausius and his followers.⁸⁷ Clay herself uses cautious language throughout, noting that the *damnatio* at Chester was most likely *ad hoc* and that the Twentieth's involvement with Carausius can only be suggested rather than proven.⁸⁸ Her argument faces two major challenges. First, the coins issued by Carausius

⁸⁶ RIB 521; Henig, CSIR I.9, 53; Clay, "Iconoclasm," 5-6.

⁸⁷ Clay, "Iconoclasm," 11-12; Mason, *Roman Chester*, 217; *Notitia Dignitatum*, ed, Otto Seeck (Berlin: Weidma, 1876), Occ. XL. The *Notitia Dignitatum* is a late Roman administrative document, compiled around 395 CE, which lists all the military units and civil offices across the empire. Significantly, the Twentieth Legion does not appear among the British garrison units, suggesting it had disbanded by this point.

⁸⁸ Clay, "Iconoclasm," 12.

commemorated several legions, not just the Twentieth, and such legionary issues are best read as propaganda rather than as proof that any specific unit supported him.⁸⁹ Secondly, panegyric sources are problematic, as they were designed to serve imperial propaganda and cannot be regarded as definitive proof. Therefore, while coins and literature hint at the Twentieth legion's connection to Carausius, they do not provide firm evidence.⁹⁰

Clay acknowledges that the *damnatio* at Chester was most likely *ad hoc* rather than fully systematic. However, the *ad hoc* nature of *damnatio memoriae* somewhat weakens her case, if the destruction, in Chester's case, was rarely organised then it strengthens the argument that some of the damage occurred during the Victorian repairs or at other points entirely unconnected to any deliberate Roman act.

Reused tombstones from other sites also bear on this question. The tombstone of Vivius Marcianus, a centurion of the Second Legion *Augusta*, was built into the later fabric of St Martin's Church on Ludgate Hill and found there in 1669. It survives undamaged apart from a dowel hole cut to lift it.⁹¹ The veteran's tombstone from Alchester, made of soft oolitic limestone, was found in pieces in the foundations of the town wall, but it broke

⁸⁹ *Roman Imperial Coinage* V.2, no. 82–33; Guy de la Bédoyère, "Carausius, Virgil and the Marks RSR and INPCDA," in *Image, Craft and the Classical World: Essays in Honour of Donald Bailey and Catherine Johns*, ed. Nina Crummy (Montagnac: Éditions Monique Mergoïl, 2005), 187–195.

⁹⁰ P. J. Casey, *Carausius and Allectus: The British Usurpers* (London: Batsford, 1994); *Roman Imperial Coinage* V.2, no. 82; Simon Elliott, *Roman Britain's Pirate King: Carausius* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2022), 98; Birgitta Hoffmann, *The Roman Invasion of Britain: Archaeology versus History* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2013), 178–179; William Dominik, ed., *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 143; Catherine Ware, *A Literary Commentary on Panegyrici Latini VI(7): An Oration Delivered before the Emperor Constantine in Trier, ca. AD 310* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 22. Varner's studies of mutilated portrait also put Clay's argument into context. His catalogue demonstrates that portraits of the emperor Otho were smashed and disfigured with a hammer and a chisel, while those of the emperor Vitellius were re-carved into the likeness of the emperor Vespasian, portraits treated differently depending on location and circumstance. Eric R. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 259.

⁹¹ RIB 17, found in 1669 during the rebuilding of St Martin's Church, Ludgate Hill; For its undamaged condition, see Henig, personal communications, 12 My 2026.

because the limestone is soft rather than through deliberate defacement.⁹² Both were reused, and both were recovered through later building or excavation, yet neither carries the mutilation that Clay identifies at Chester. This suggests that reuse need not involve such damage, though it cannot tell us what caused the damage at Chester. Reuse, the Victorian recovery, and deliberate defacement all remain possible, and the evidence does not allow a firm choice between them.

Alongside this Croxford argues that Iconoclasm cannot account for all the instances of image destruction in Roman Britain, suggesting that fragmentation and reuse could carry meaning rather than simply representing destruction.⁹³ Clay, herself also acknowledges that some of the tombstones reused in the wall date to the period of the *II Legio*, noting they carry no figural decoration.⁹⁴ As discussed above, Clay makes a careful case for the decline and defacement of the Twentieth Legion's commemorative practice. In the case of RIB 521 is a clear instance of genuine destruction. Yet as a general explanation, it does not hold, theory of culling and destroying the XX's reputation because of their involvement with the usurper Carausius seems almost Romantized. Indeed, the damage is not consistent, some of it is likely Victorian, and reuse can account for much of the rest. Deliberate defacement at Chester is the exception and not the pattern.

3.4. Stone, Workshops, and the production of Funerary Monuments.

Most of Chester's tombstones were carved from local sandstone. Clay confirms that all were carved from the Manley and Bunter red sandstone, and Henig's sculptural

⁹² Eberhard W, Sauer, "Inscriptions from Alchester: Vespasian's Base of the Second Augustan Legion (?)," *Britannia* 36 (2005): 101-133 (the Alchester tombstone is RIB III 3121); For its breakage is natural, see Henig, personal communication, 12 May 2026.

⁹³ Ben Croxford, "Iconoclasm in Roman Britain" *Britannia* 34 (2003): 81-94.

⁹⁴ Clay, "Iconoclasm," 4-5.

catalogue identifies the same material pattern throughout the *corpus*.⁹⁵ The fortress sits on a ridge of red sandstone, and Roman quarries have been identified at Handbridge south of the river Dee at Edgar's field, where traces of quarrying activity remain visible alongside a rock-cut shrine to Minerva, still *in situ*.⁹⁶ Clay notes that the quarry at Edgar's field was only 500 metres from the north wall, fresh stone, therefore was readily available during repairs. Furthermore, Clay observes that the cemeteries were situated to the west and south of the fortress, no closer to the north wall than the quarry itself. This strengthens her argument, if fresh stone was so close, the decision to use tombstones instead appears to have been a deliberate choice rather than a practical necessity.⁹⁷ There is simpler reading too. A tombstone is already cut and roughly shaped, so reusing one saved the labour of quarrying and dressing fresh stone, even with a quarry close by. The choice need not have been symbolic.

To understand the condition of Chester's tombstones it is worth considering how they were produced in the first place. Susini shows Roman inscriptions were produced not in specialist workshops but in general *officinae*, where the *quadratarius* planned the surface and the *lapicida* did the cutting, though one craftsman often handled the whole process across two stages, layout then carving.⁹⁸ Evidence from across the Roman world indicates that monuments such as those from Chester could be left incomplete at different stages of production.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 3; Henig, CSIR 1.9, *passim*.

⁹⁶ Mason, *Roman Chester*, 183.

⁹⁷ Clay, "Iconoclasm," 3, citing F.H. Thompson, "Roman Cheshire," in *History of Cheshire*, vol. 2 (Chester: Cheshire Community Council, 1965), 28.

⁹⁸ G. Susini, *The Roman Stonecutter: An Introduction to Latin Epigraphy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), 14-20.

Edmondson notes that army had stonecutters among their staff, whose duties included carving official inscriptions required by unit commanders.⁹⁹ He also identifies examples of civilian stonecutting workshops, *officinae*, operating in urban settings across the Roman empire, particularly Ostia.¹⁰⁰ Where Chester's tombstones were produced is less clear. No workshop has been identified archaeologically at Chester to date, and whether the tombstones were produced by military stonecutters, civilian workshops or some combination of both remains for now unknown.

3.5 The *Ascia*

As noted, the *ascia* is an axe or adze shaped symbol that appears on or near the *D* *M* formula, and it is one of the more intriguing features found on a small number of Chester's tombstones. RIB 491, the tombstone of Marcus Aurelius Nepos, centurion of the Twentieth legion, is described as *sub ascia* and dedicated while still under the hammer, and with stonecutters hammer and square set visible on the stone.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Jonathan Edmondson, "Inscribing Roman Texts: Officinae, Layout, and Carving Techniques," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, ed. Christer Bruun and Jonathan Edmondson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 111.

¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Edmondson, "Inscribing Roman Texts," 114.

¹⁰¹ RIB 491; Henig, CSIR 1.9, 33.



Figure 5: Tombstone of Marcus Aurelius Nepos (RIB 491), dedicated *sub ascia*. Source: RIB ONLINE.

Susini's discussion of *lapicidia*, the craftsman who handles the chisel or axe, is relevant here, as the *ascia* may represent the tools of the stone cutter rather than a deliberate symbolic choice.¹⁰² Henig, however, describes the *ascia* formula as being used as a form of divine protection for those in the tomb.¹⁰³ The formula, as stated above, was overwhelmingly a Gallic one. Bennett's mapping found only 461 examples across the whole empire, 96 per cent of them concentrated in Aquitania, Gallia Narbonensis and Lugdunensis, with more than half of Lugdunum's own epitaphs alone using it.¹⁰⁴ RIB 491 is the only Chester example using the specific *sub ascia* formula itself.¹⁰⁵ Two further Chester tombstones show the symbol without that exact wording, Watkin's second example (Domitia Saturnia) and RIB 564, both discussed below, and further examples may yet come to light as more material is recovered or reassessed.¹⁰⁶

Watkin, writing in 1887, observed a second Chester tombstone, that of Domitia Saturnia, on which the *ascia*, *malleus*, *ligo* and *scalprum* appear together on the side of the tombstone.

¹⁰² Susini, *Roman Stonecutter*, 14.

¹⁰³ Henig, *CSIR* 1.9, 13.

¹⁰⁴ Bennet, "Global Patterns of Commemoration," ch.4.

¹⁰⁵ RIB 491.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 491.

He argues these four implements represented the carving of the stone and the digging of the grave, suggesting *sub ascia* referred to the whole process of funerary preparation rather than simply the stone cutter's work.¹⁰⁷ Henig confirms that RIB 564 was dedicated *sub ascia*, identifying the tools on the left side of the stone as an adze, pick, punch, plummet and dating the stone to the second half of the second century CE.¹⁰⁸

Whatever its precise meaning, the appearance of the *ascia* at Chester suggests that funerary traditions found elsewhere in the empire were also reaching Britain. Although rare in Britain, the symbol demonstrates that commemorative practices at Chester formed part of wider trends in Roman funerary culture.

3.6 Soldiers of an unknown Legion.

The soldiers commemorated at Chester are almost all legionaries. Auxiliaries are scarce in the funerary record here, which fits a wider pattern: across Britain, the figurative monuments, the rider-reliefs and the banquet scenes, were favoured by auxiliaries rather than legionaries.¹⁰⁹ One exception is RIB 557, *the tombstone* of a cavalry trooper serving in an *ala* or *cohors equitata*, confirming that auxiliary commemoration did reach Chester, if however rarely.¹¹⁰ Chester's *corpus* is, therefore, overwhelmingly legionary in character, a fact worth stating plainly before turning to York and Colchester, where the auxiliary dimension of commemoration matters far more.

¹⁰⁷ Watkin, "Roman Inscriptions," 20.

¹⁰⁸ Henig, CSIR 1.9, NO. 63, 22.

¹⁰⁹ P. Stewart, "Totenmahl Reliefs in the Northern Provinces: A Case-Study in Imperial Sculpture," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 22 (2009), 253-274; I am grateful to P. Coombe for this reference, personal communication 6 June 2026.

¹¹⁰ RIB 557.

Beyond the tombstones that can be attributed to the Second Legion and Twentieth legion is a *corpus* of some twenty-six fragemented tombstones, where in most cases just the soldiers name is extant, the legion, therefore, cannot be determined with certainty. Dating these stones is not straightforward. Keppie notes that the *Dis Manibus* formula suggests a date no earlier than the mid first century CE, and more probably the second or third centuries, which would point toward the Twentieth Legion for a number of these stones.¹¹¹

The tombstone of Gaius Julius Marullinus, a *beneficiarius* of a military tribune who lived forty-five years (RIB 532), is a case in point. Keppie's dating indicator, the presence of the *Dis Manibus* formula points toward the Twentieth Legion.¹¹²

By contrast, the tombstone of Lucius Antestius Sabinus of the Sergian voting tribe, from Corduba, the capital of Baetica in Spain (RIB 518), may point toward an earlier date.

The *RIB* commentary confirms that Corduba was assigned to the Sergian tribe.¹¹³ Given how fragmentary this *corpus* is, all such attributions must be treated with caution.

3.7 Family, Women, and Civilians

The tombstones demonstrate that the military had emotional attachments to those around them, most likely people from the *civitas*: wives commemorated husbands, and husbands commemorated wives and children. While the epigraphic habit spread through the army,

¹¹¹ Keppie, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions*, 25-29.

¹¹² RIB 532.

¹¹³ RIB 518.

here we see a pattern beyond burial clubs and a military 'sense of audience'. What the tombstones reveal instead is genuine attachment, a motivation the purely military reading of Chester's habit cannot fully explain.

Women appear both as the commemorates and as the commissioners throughout Chester's *epigraphic corpus*. One such example is that of Curatia Dinysia RIB 562, who lived for forty years, and is one of the most elaborately decorated monuments in Chester. Stewart identifies this monument as a British example of the Totenmahl and uses it to argue that in Britain the motif resonated with civilians and women rather than being confined to soldiers.¹¹⁴

Henig points out that some of the finest tombstones at Chester were memorials to wealthy women, suggesting that women of means played a significant role in the commemorative landscape of the fortress community.¹¹⁵ Her heir commissioned the monument, suggesting she was an affluent woman of social standing within the community.

Ball's work on women as commemorators at fortress sites in Roman Britain is directly relevant here, demonstrating that women played an active role in maintaining commemorative traditions within military communities.¹¹⁶ The tombstone of the centurion Marcus Aurelius Nepos (RIB 491) was erected by his most devoted wife, whose name was never recorded. This indicates that women could play an active role in commemoration and yet could remain entirely anonymous. In addition, the tombstone of

¹¹⁴ Stewart, "Totenmahl Reliefs in the Northern Provinces," 253-274; Henig, CSIR, no. 6, Plate 21, Henig describes the tombstone as showing the deceased reclining on a funerary couch within a round-headed niche with a pilaster and Tritons blowing spandrels, imagery evoking the voyage to the isles of the blessed, and two confronted doves above a swag.

¹¹⁵ Henig, M. "Dining in Paradise: The Totenmahl in Roman Britain." In the *Monuments Man*. Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2020.

¹¹⁶ Ball, "The (In)visibility of Women" 49.

husband and wife Voconia Nigrina and Gaius Valerius Victor (RIB 543) shows the couple commemorated together, standing side by side on the stone.

Children were also commemorated, the tombstone of Lucius Festinius Probus (RIB 537), who died aged just two years and twenty-nine days, was erected by his father Lucius Sempronius Probianus. Both bear the *tria nomina* indicating Roman citizenship, though the differing *gentilicia* of father and son, Sempronius and Festinius, is noteworthy and may suggest the child took his name from his mother's family. The father's status as soldier or civilian cannot be determined from the inscription alone.¹¹⁷ The simple inscription of Restita and Martia (RIB 566) two girls aged seven and three, their parents unnamed and unrecorded speaks to a grief that is entirely recognisable today. Keppie notes that Roman funerary inscriptions frequently concluded with the formula *sit tibi terra levis* which translates as may the earth lie lightly upon you, a sentiment attested in Britain itself, as on the tombstone of a most dutiful wife at York (RIB 693).¹¹⁸ Martial captures that same feeling in his epigram for the child Erotion, asking: '*Mollia non rigidus caespes tegat ossa, nec illi, / Terra, gravis fueris: non fuit illa tibi*' may soft turf cover her soft bones, and earth, weigh not heavily upon her, for she was never heavy upon you.¹¹⁹ Martial uses the subjunctive *sit* and *tegat* to express a wish for the child's peaceful rest. Similar sentiments appear in Roman funerary inscriptions through formulae such as *Dis Manibus* and *sit tibi terra levis*. The grief expressed on the tombstones of Chester was therefore not unique to Britain but formed part of a wider Roman tradition of mourning and commemorating the dead across the empire.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ RIB 537.

¹¹⁸ Keppie, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions*, 107; RIB 693

¹¹⁹ Martial, *Epigrams*, V. 34.

¹²⁰ M. Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead: Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe* (Oxford, 2006), 54.

3.8 Slaves, Freedmen and the Wider Community

The Chester *corpus* also includes monuments of slaves and freedmen, suggesting that commemoration here was not reserved for soldiers alone. The tombstone of three slaves, Atilianus, Antiatilianus and Protus (RIB 560), erected by their master Pompeius Optatus, is particularly striking. The RIB commentary notes that by their names and ages, Atilianis and Antiatilianus both aged 10 appear to be twins.¹²¹ Protus was aged 12. That a slave owner invested in a funerary monument indicates that commemoration was not limited to either the military or the elite. The presence of the *Dis Manibus* formula, as Tomlin notes, dates this tombstone to the first century, placing it among the earlier examples of non-military commemoration at Chester.¹²² Mouritsen claimed that patrons commemorated slaves and freedmen to honour their loyalty and service, reflecting the close relationship that developed within the Roman *familia*.¹²³ A further example is provided by RIB 559, the tombstone of Etacontius, described as a deserving freedman, erected by his patron Gaius Asurius Fortis. Mouritsen argues that the relationship between patron and freedman was defined by bonds of debt and gratitude, the *beneficium* of freedom, which continued after manumission and was often expressed publicly through funerary commemoration.¹²⁴ Both stones were recovered from the north wall, reused as building material and removed from their original cemetery context, RIB 560 in 1887 and RIB 559 in 1891.¹²⁵

¹²¹ RIB 560.

¹²² Tomlin, *Roman Britain*, xii.

¹²³ H. Mouritsen, *The Freedman in the Roman World* (Cambridge, 2011), 36.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹²⁵ RIB 559-560.

RIB 558, found during sewer works in 1874 still with two skeletons, suggesting it remained in its original burial context, commemorates Flavius Callimorphus and the child Serapion in a Totenmahl scene.¹²⁶ Henig read the motif as almost exclusively military in Roman Britain, but Stewart has since shown it was taken up mainly by civilians and women; Callimorphus, a trader or freedman, fits this reading.¹²⁷ A gold ring among the grave goods led Henig to suggest he may have acquired equestrian status, one of the more socially elevated burials in the Chester *corpus*.¹²⁸

The monuments demonstrate that participation in the 'epigraphic habit' at Chester extended well beyond the legion itself. Slaves, freedmen and civilians all appear within the funerary record, suggesting that the fortress community was more socially diverse than a purely military reading of the evidence might imply.

3.9. The Decline of Funerary epigraphy at Chester

The question of when and why funerary inscription declined at Chester is at the heart of this study. Most tombstones cannot be precisely dated. Removed from their original burial context and reused in the north wall, the archaeological evidence that might have dated them was lost. What can be said with reasonable confidence is that the production of funerary monuments in stone at Chester declined significantly by the later third century, without clearly datable fourth-century funerary inscriptions identified at the site. The absence of later inscriptions does not by itself mean commemoration stopped.

The RIB catalogues neither sub-Roman nor early Christian tombstones, so the silence after

¹²⁶ RIB 558; Henig CSIR 1.9, 23; Tomlin, *Roman Britain*, 235, no. 9.49.

¹²⁷ Henig, "Dining in Paradise," 26-45; P. Stewart, "Totenmahl Reliefs in the Northern Provinces: A Case-Study in Imperial Sculpture," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 22 (2009): 253-274.

¹²⁸ Henig, "Dining in Paradise," 26-45.

the third century reflects the scope of the catalogue as much as anything that happened on the ground. What the corpus shows is the decline of the Roman stone-cut habit as RIB records it and not necessarily the end of commemoration itself, which lies beyond what this evidence can tell us.

The tombstones examined in this study suggest that Chester was not unique, though the lack of *in situ* archaeological evidence means the odd exception cannot be ruled out. MacMullen had identified a broad decline in the epigraphic habit across the western provinces from the later second and third centuries onwards.¹²⁹ Woolf has shown that monumental writing depended on a particular kind of social environment, noting that in Britain inscriptions were concentrated almost exclusively in military contexts, and that as that environment changed, so did the drive to inscribe.¹³⁰ Chester was exactly the kind of environment Woolf describes. Mullen's analysis in the Latin Now dataset confirms that in Britain this pattern was shaped by the specifically military character of the epigraphic habit, the local population never fully adopted commemoration in stone, and it was the army that had driven the practice from the outset.¹³¹ The habit rested almost entirely on the army and the civilians who depended on it, veterans, traders, soldiers' families, freedmen. There was no broad local tradition beneath it. Chester's decline is pointing toward a wider, empire-wide decline.

Meyer's argument is less convincing when applied to Chester. Her claim that the extension of citizenship under the *Constitutio Antoniniana* (P. Giss 40) of 212 CE undermined the need for epigraphic self-expression is difficult to sustain in a legionary setting, where soldiers

¹²⁹ MacMullen, "Epigraphic Habit," 238, 242, 244-245.

¹³⁰ Woolf, "Monumental Writing," 23-25.

¹³¹ Mullen, "Exploring Life and Languages," 21.

had possessed citizenship long before Caracalla's grant. The voting tribe evidence in the Chester *corpus* suggests that soldiers did not need to be ostentatious about their citizenship status. Commemoration may owe more to unit solidarity and the *collegia*, associations that, among other things, helped fund members' funerary monuments rather than any desire to display citizenship.¹³² Henig's CSIR catalogue suggests this commemoration continued into the second quarter of the third century, after which the record falls silent.¹³³ By this point the garrison, itself was already changing. RIB 523 records a Bessian tribesman with no voting tribe, praenomen, or father's name, the traditional markers that had defined the Chester tombstone were already disappearing from within the garrison.¹³⁴ Henig's catalogue records 114 funerary monuments in total, including uninscribed stones and fragments which cannot be dated. Even accounting for this, the pattern is striking. This gradual erosion of the traditional epigraphic formula reflects what Woolf has described as the relationship between monumental writing and social complexity, the drive to inscribe identity in stone depended on a particular kind of social environment in which commemoration served a public, communicative function.¹³⁵ At Chester that environment was changing. The cosmopolitan garrison of soldiers from Gaul, Spain, Italy, Syria and Thrace, who had recorded their voting tribes and origins in stone, was giving way to a different kind of military presence, mirroring the wider decline rather than marking a cause peculiar to Chester.

The reuse of these tombstones in the north wall is part of the same story. Reuse does not have to mean the monuments no longer mattered. It can be read as the next stage in the life

¹³² R. Collins, *Soldiers in Life and Death: Material Culture and Mortality in the Military Community*, in *Materialising Roman Histories* (Oxford, 2017), 31-46.

¹³³ Henig, *CSIR*, 1.9, 9-35.

¹³⁴ *RIB* 523.

¹³⁵ Woolf, "Monumental Writing," 17.

of the stone. As Cooley has shown, an inscription has a life cycle that runs past its making: it was viewed, reused, and in the end destroyed.¹³⁶ So, the Chester tombstones did not necessarily end up in the wall out of contempt for the dead, but because the fortress needed material and no one was making new monuments anymore. Chester was not unusual in this. The same thing happened at Bordeaux, where tombstones turned up in the late town walls, reused as building stone.¹³⁷ Putting old tombstones into late defences was common across the provinces, and needs no special explanation. It is also why so many of the Chester stones survive at all. Reused building material usually destroys the original inscriptions. Here the opposite happened, the move into the wall is the reason the tombstones were saved. The stones still mattered. Not as memorials now, but as building material, and as pieces of a past the community was already losing touch with.

¹³⁶ A. E. Cooley, *The Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy* (Cambridge, 2022), 285-325. By destroyed is meant the gradual loss of the monument through dilapidation, fragmentation, and re-use, rather than a single deliberate act of destruction.

¹³⁷ J. Pearce, "An Empire of Words? Archaeology and Writing in the Roman World", in J. Tanner and A. Gardner (eds.), *Materialising the Roman Empire* (London, 2024), 56.

3.10 Conclusion

The epigraphic record of Chester reveals a garrison community of social and geographical diversity. The tombstones of the Second Legion Adiutrix and Twentieth Legion Valeria Victrix demonstrate recruitment patterns stretching from Spain and Gaul to northern Italy and the eastern Alps, reflecting the cosmopolitan character of Romano-British fortress communities identified by Haynes. Hanson's population-scaling model sits outside the kind of evidence it was built on, a gap the following chapter's comparison with York and Colchester will help to close.

Many of Chester's tombstones are fragmentary and reused, recovered from the north wall rather than from the graves they once marked. Genuine defacement, such as the imaginifer RIB 521, is the exception, not the pattern. Commemoration reached beyond the soldiers themselves, women, children, civilians, freedmen and slaves all appear, though the habit never took root in the local population, so when it faded there was nothing to carry it on.

The decline at Chester was not a local story. The habit was military, and the army was an empire-wide institution, so its decline was too. Nothing was left to take its place once the army thinned. The next chapter tests this at York and Colchester.

Chapter 4

York (Eboracum) and Colchester (Camulodunum): Comparative Perspective

4.1 Introduction

The town of Eboracum (modern day York) served a wide range of civic and military functions, greater than that of the other two sites in this study, and its funerary monuments commemorate the widest social range of people. It was founded around 71 CE as a legionary fortress, garrisoned first by the (infamous) Ninth legion and from the 120's CE by the Sixth legion.¹³⁸ A civilian settlement grew across the river Ouse which was raised to the status of *colonia* during the third century CE, the highest status a provincial town could hold.¹³⁹ By the early third century the single province of Britain had been divided in two, Britannia Superior in the south, governed from London and Britannia Inferior in the north, governed from York.¹⁴⁰ York was now a provincial capital, and this mattered in terms of commemoration. As a provincial capital, York brought the people the wealth and the reasons to mark a death in stone,¹⁴¹ and went on doing so when other places, such as Colchester had stopped.¹⁴² Furthermore by the third century CE, York had become the seat of imperial government in Britain.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Ottaway, *Roman York*, 11.

¹³⁹ J. Wachter, *The Towns of Roman Britain* (London, Routledge, 1995), 167-188.

¹⁴⁰ A. R. Birley, *The Roman Government of Britain* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005), 181-183. The division was carried out under Caracalla, around 211 to 213 CE, and the boundary is usually reconstructed as running approximately from the Mersey to the Humber. The terms Superior and Inferior denote distance from Rome, upper and lower, not rank.

¹⁴¹ Ottaway, *Roman York*, 11.

¹⁴² The contrast rests on the funerary catalogue compiled for this study; See Appendix C and B, with fuller discussion below.

¹⁴³ The Imperial presence at York was twice marked by the death of a reigning emperor: Septimus Severus, who campaigned in the north from York and died on 4 February 211 CE, and Constantius I, who died there on 25 July 306 CE, whereupon his son Constantine was proclaimed emperor by the legions in York; See Ottaway, *Roman York*, 11.

York held more roles than Chester or Colchester combined, and its tombstones commemorate a correspondingly wider range of people. Chester's commemorations related almost entirely to the army.¹⁴⁴ Colchester, a *colonia* of veterans discussed in full below, flourished early and then stopped, its record cut short by the Boudiccan revolt of 60 to 61 CE.¹⁴⁵ York alone combined a permanent army with a settled civilian community, and its commemoration continued into the third century, in the hands of soldiers, councillors, veterans and women.¹⁴⁶

York and Colchester were therefore major Roman centres but at different times.¹⁴⁷ The previous chapter argued that at Chester the epigraphic habit was wholly military and never took root beyond the fortress and the people who served it.¹⁴⁸ This study, therefore, tests York and Colchester against Chester, to weigh the wider explanations for the rise and fall of the 'Epigraphic habit'. MacMullen first identified the pattern but left its cause open, suggesting only that it was governed by a 'sense of audience.'¹⁴⁹ Meyer supplied the citizenship answer, arguing that epitaphs advertised Roman status, so the habit fell after 212 CE once emperor Caracalla extended Roman citizenship to almost all free inhabitants of the empire.¹⁵⁰ Woolf tied the 'epigraphic habit' instead to the spread of Roman society. In Britain Biró found half of all inscribed tombstones named soldiers and most of the rest

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter 3.

¹⁴⁵ Peter Salway, *Roman Britain* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984), 94, 104; For the Boudiccan revolt, see paragraph 4.2 below.

¹⁴⁶ See the funerary catalogue, Appendix C, the third century stones include *RIB* 674, 685, 686, 688 and 690.

¹⁴⁷ Colchester was Roman Britain's first *colonia*, called *Colonia Victricensis* founded around 49 CE; York rose later, becoming a *colonia* and provincial capital by the early third century; See Chittenden, *Roman Colchester: Exploring Britain's First City*, 8 and Ottaway, *Roman York*, 82-82.

¹⁴⁸ See Chapter 3.

¹⁴⁹ MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit," 233-246.

¹⁵⁰ Meyer, "Explaining the Epigraphic Habit," 76-96.

their families.¹⁵¹ Mullen's Latin Now data confirms the military character of the 'epigraphic habit' in Britain, where the civilian population never fully adopted the habit.¹⁵²

This chapter is arranged by theme rather than by site, so that York and Colchester are compared throughout. It begins with the military foundation the two shared, the early soldiers' tombstones at both. It then turns to what followed the army, where the two sites part, Colchester's record thinning while York's continues. It looks next at the civilian community at York, the women, families and freedmen who have no equal at Colchester, before turning to the material of commemoration, from York's inscribed *sarcophagi* to the imported stone of Colchester's finest monument. It closes on the test of 212 CE, weighing the dated evidence of both sites against Meyer. York and Colchester show that commemoration continued only where a settled community remained to sustain it.

The veteran colony at Colchester, where Tacitus describes the colonists' as taking last stand against Boudicca at the Temple of Claudius, was burned down not long after its foundation.¹⁵³ Many of the veterans likely died there. The town was rebuilt and carried on as a *colonia*,¹⁵⁴ but the epigraphic habit never came back with it. Colchester's early silence is read not as a gap but as evidence, of a town that never fully recovered its commemorative habit after the Boudiccan revolt.

4.2 The Military Foundation

Two of the earliest tombstones found in Roman Britain commemorate soldiers. Both

¹⁵¹ Woolf, "Monumental Writing," 22-39; M. Bíró, "The Inscriptions of Roman Britain," *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 27 (1975): 13-58, at 45.

¹⁵² Mullen, "Exploring Life and Languages," 20.

¹⁵³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.32.

¹⁵⁴ David Radford and Adrian Gascoyne, *Colchester, Fortress of the War God: An Archaeological Assessment*, ed. Phillip Wise (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013), 99.

belong to Colchester. As discussed in Chapter 3, the commemorative practice was not native to Britain. It arrived with the Roman army, part of the epigraphic habit already established in the western provinces.¹⁵⁵ The two tombstones left behind, one of a legionary and one of an auxiliary soldier, were both found in the western cemetery of the town.¹⁵⁶

The Twentieth legion was based at Colchester from the conquest of 43 CE, before relocating to Kingsholm, Gloucester, under Ostorius Scapula. The colonia was founded there in 49 CE, described by Tacitus as land settled by 'a strong detachment of veterans.' Auxiliary units, including the Thracian cavalry regiment *Ala I Thracum*, served alongside the legion.¹⁵⁷

The first is the tombstone of Marcus Favoniud Facilis, a centurion of the Twentieth Legion.¹⁵⁸ It was set up by two of his freedmen, Verecundius and Novicius, and carried no *Dis Manibus*, giving his name in the nominative, both marks of an earlier date.¹⁵⁹ Facilus stands in an arched niche, in the full uniform of a centurion, his cloak over his soldier, one hand resting on his sword and the other holding the *vitis*, the vine staff associated with his rank.¹⁶⁰ Though the surviving stone shows only worn traces of colour

¹⁵⁵ Hope, "Inscriptions and Identity," 289. Hope argues that the epigraphic habit in the German provinces, from where many of Britain's soldiers came from, had already peaked by the late first century CE and was in decline by the time the legions and auxiliaries became established in Britain.

¹⁵⁶ RIB 200 and RIB 201; See the catalogue, Appendix B.

¹⁵⁷ Radford and Gascoyne, Colchester, Fortress of the War God, 77; Tacitus, Annals, 12.32.

¹⁵⁸ RIB 200; See the catalogue, Appendix B; See also Hoffmann, *The Roman invasion of Britain: Archaeology versus History*, 73, who states centurions rarely recorded retirement status, so Facilis' tombstone could have belonged to a retired veteran rather than a serving soldier.

¹⁵⁹ The absence of *Dis Manibus*, the nominate form of the names, and the legion without its later title *Valeria Victrix* date the stone to before the Boudiccan revolt of 60 TO 61 CE.

¹⁶⁰ For more on the iconography, see E. J. Phillips, "The Gravestone of M. Favionus Facilis at Colchester," *Britannia* 6 (1975), 102-103.

today, a reconstruction in Colchester Museum shows how the monument would originally have appeared, fully painted.



Figure 6: Painted reconstruction of Marcus Favonius Facilis' tombstone, showing probable original colouring (Colchester Museum). Source: Author's own.

The carving is of continental style, its niche and leaf-patterns belonging to the funerary art of the Rhineland, and the stone itself was imported from eastern France.¹⁶¹ The style and the

¹⁶¹ K, M. J. Hayward, "A Geological Link between the Facilis Monument at Colchester and First-century Army Tombstones from the Rhineland Frontier," *Britannia* 37 (2006), 359.

stone tell the same story. The monument was not made in Britain but brought to it, the work of military sculptors carrying a Mediterranean tradition.

The second tombstone is the more elaborate of the two, yet it belongs to an auxiliary not a citizen. Longinus Sdapeze was a *duplicarius*, a second in command, of the *Ala I Thracum*, the Thracian cavalry regiment stationed in Colchester.¹⁶²



Figure 7: Tombstone of Longinus Sdapeze, *duplicarius* of the *Ala I Thracum* (Colchester Museum). Source: Author's own.

He came from Sardica in Thrace and died aged forty after fifteen years of service. He died ten years short of Roman citizenship. Longinus is shown mounted above a defeated barbarian, a sphinx flanked by two lions in the pediment above.¹⁶³

¹⁶² RIB 210; See catalogue, Appendix B. The *Ala I Thracum* is attested at Colchester circa 45 CE. On the *Ala I Thracum* at Colchester, see Simon Turner, *The Roman Auxiliary Units of Britain* (Barnsley, Pen & Sword, 2024), 148.

¹⁶³ RIB 201. Again this tombstone pre-dates the Boudiccan revolt, commemoration likely around 55 CE.



Figure 8: The sphinx from the pediment of Longinus Sdapeze's tombstone (Colchester Museum). Source: Author's own.

This monument fits the theories of both MacMullen, who tied the 'Epigraphic habit' to a 'sense of audience' and Meyer who argues that the 'Epigraphic habit' let non-Roman citizens demonstrate their belonging.¹⁶⁴ His tombstone is a rider stone, the earliest of its type in Roman Britain, and one of a wider group discussed below.

¹⁶⁴ MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit," 233-246; Meyer, "Explaining the Epigraphic Habit," 74-96.

Both tombstones date from before the Boudiccan revolt of 60 to 61 CE, when Colchester was destroyed.¹⁶⁵ Archaeologists have identified this burning as the 'Boudiccan destruction layer'.¹⁶⁶ Longinus's tombstone was found face down and broken into at least ten pieces when it was rediscovered in 1928, a pattern of damage and burial that helped preserve it.¹⁶⁷ The Roman historian Tacitus claims in his *Annals* that the fire was due to the Boudiccan revolt. He describes a veteran colony, resented by the Britons because 'they drove people out of their houses [and] ejected them from their land'.¹⁶⁸

Hoffmann notes that ancient historians made deliberate choices about what to include, and that Tacitus shaped his narrative around the moral character of the figures involved.¹⁶⁹ Around 70 CE Colchester was rebuilt with a defensive wall, fragmented remains of which can still be seen, but its funerary record never recovered.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Radford and Gascoyne, *Colchester, Fortress of the War God*, xxii; Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.31.

¹⁶⁶ Chittenden, *Roman Colchester: Exploring Britain's First City*, 10.

¹⁶⁷ Colchester Heritage Explorer, "Roman Tombstone of Longinus, Beverley Road, Colchester," record MCC1361.

¹⁶⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.32.

¹⁶⁹ Hoffman, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 10-13.

¹⁷⁰ Chittenden, *Roman Colchester*, 12.

4.3 After the Army

The later tombstones that survive are few and mostly fragmented. The clearest is the tombstone of an equestrian, set up by his wife Valeria Frontina,¹⁷¹ though nothing among the later stones matches the two early monuments. They include a centurion who had served in several legions,¹⁷² and a young man named Mucianus.¹⁷³ None matches the scale or ambition of Facilis and Longinus. Only three tombstones survive from Colchester after the Boudiccan revolt, none of them securely dated, against the two which can be dated with confidence to before it. The sparse and undatable material shows that the epigraphic habit never took root again after Colchester was destroyed." It became a *colonia*, a chartered town of citizens, the very community Meyer's argument says should have sustained the habit. Yet the habit had already died out long before Caracalla's citizenship grant in 212 CE.¹⁷⁴ Meyer's theory does not hold at Colchester.

York's story after the army is different, because the army never really left. The Ninth Legion gave way to the Sixth, and the fortress kept its garrison for the rest of the Roman period.¹⁷⁵ What changed was not the presence of soldiers but the growth of a civilian population alongside them, drawn by the trade, land and permanence that a long-settled garrison brought.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ RIB 202; Catalogue, Appendix C.

¹⁷² RIB 203; Catalogue, Appendix C.

¹⁷³ RIB 204; Catalogue, Appendix C.

¹⁷⁴ Meyer, "Explaining the Epigraphic Habit," 74-96.

¹⁷⁵ RIB 673; RIB 680; Catalogue, Appendix C.

¹⁷⁶ Ottaway, *Roman York*, 82.

4.4 The Civilian Community at York

Flavius Bellator's inscription tells us he was a *decurion* of York's *colonia*, a member of its governing council. His *sarcophagus* dates from after 208- 211 CE, and his skeleton was found with an official gold ring set with a ruby, a mark of rank that had nothing to do with military service.¹⁷⁷ Bellator's sarcophagus is not the only civilian monument at York. Another tombstone shows Aurelius Mercurialis, heir to Julia Velva, who died aged fifty.



Figure 9: Tombstone of Julia Velva (RIB 688), with her heir Aurelius Mercurialis (York Museum). Source: Author's own.

It shows her reclining on a couch with a cup in her hand, the scene of a funerary banquet.¹⁷⁸

He stands beside her, bearded, holding the scroll of her will. Ottaway states this is an ostentatious display, designed to link Mercurialis to the Roman empire, which, in this instance, appears to support Meyer's theory.¹⁷⁹ Julia Fortunata's coffin offers a simpler

¹⁷⁷ RIB 674; Catalogue, Appendix C.

¹⁷⁸ RIB 688; Catalogue, Appendix C.

¹⁷⁹ P. Ottaway, *Julia Velva: A Roman Lady from York, Her Life and Times Revealed* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2021), 246.

epitaph by contrast, commemorating her only as a loyal wife (*fida coniunx*) to her husband Verecundius Diogenes, with no office, rank, or citizenship advertised, a reminder that not every York monument served the display purposes seen in Mercurialis' or Bellator's.¹⁸⁰



Figure 10: Coffin of Julia Fortunata (RIB 687), York Museum. Source: Author's own.

Of the thirty tombstones Ottaway counts from York, twenty name women, as wives, mothers, or daughters.¹⁸¹ Aelia Severa's sarcophagus is another example. Her freedman, Caecilius Musicus, set it up after her death, describing her as an *honesta femina*, the wife of a local decurion.¹⁸² Ottaway suggests Musicus, like Mercurialis, had his own reasons for commissioning such a monument, since it advertised his own connection to a woman of standing, and by extension his own advancement, following his manumission.¹⁸³ Once again, a York monument points toward status display rather than away from it.

A tombstone for Corellia Optata shows a different side of York's civilian record. She died aged thirteen, shown standing in a niche of which only her feet survive, and her father,

¹⁸⁰ RIB 687.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 246.

¹⁸² The RIB commentary translates this as 'wife of a local senator,' yet Birley argues that her status as *honesta femina* must mean her husband, Caecilius Rufus, who held the rank of *Decurion* (the provinces version of a senator). For a further discussion, see Birley, *The Roman Government of Britain*, 13.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 246.

Quintus Corellius Fortis, commemorated her with a rare verse epitaph, one of only two known from Roman Britain, addressing the shades of the underworld and mourning his innocent daughter.¹⁸⁴



Figure 11: Verse epitaph of Corellia Optata (RIB 684), York Museum. Source: Author's own.

There is no ostentatious display here, only grief, the same convention of mourning already seen in Martial's epigram for *Erotion* at Chester. Optata is not an isolated case. Ball's study of pre-1939 funerary inscriptions found that 65 percent of York's corpus names a woman, against just 14 percent at Chester.¹⁸⁵ Ball argues women were not absent from the evidence. Rather, antiquarian scholarship simply ignored them, right through to the mid-twentieth century. Ball puts this down to confirmation bias: scholars assumed military sites were all-male, so they never looked for evidence of women, even where it existed. That said,

¹⁸⁴ RIB 683; Tufi, Sergio Rinaldi. *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani: Corpus of Sculpture of the Roman World*, Great Britain. Vol. 1, fasc. 3, Yorkshire. The British Academy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983,13; Catalogue, Appendix C.

¹⁸⁵ Ball, "The (In)visibility of Women," 52-54.

fortresses really were mostly male institutions, so it is only to be expected that fewer women than men would be commemorated. What Ball's numbers show is a difference between sites, not just between the sexes. York's 65 percent against Chester's 14 percent points to something beyond antiquarian bias. York had a settled civilian population bound up with its status as *colonia* and provincial capital; Chester's civilian presence, centred on Handbridge, remained smaller and more tightly tied to the fortress itself.

Furthermore, Ball's figures raise a genuine problem for Hanson, who argues that inscription numbers lag behind a settlement's population rather than growing in step with it.¹⁸⁶ Chester's *corpus* of either 93 (*RIB*) or 95 (Ball) qualifying funerary inscriptions is more than double York's 36 (*RIB*) or 29 (Ball), even though York was a fortress, a *colonia*, and eventually a provincial capital.¹⁸⁷ Hanson's model would predict the opposite. Size alone does not explain Chester's higher numbers. Something else was driving production there, while York's more mixed community produced a wider range of commemoration instead. That said, Hoffmann notes that only a small fraction of archaeological material, somewhere between one and 0.1 per cent, is ever recovered, so this difference between the two sites may owe something to the accidents of survival and excavation, not just to a real difference between them.¹⁸⁸

4.5 Material and Status

Some of York's grandest funerary monuments do not survive as complete tombstones at all, only as fragments hinting at something far larger. Ottaway suggests that a large stone slab

¹⁸⁶ Hanson, "Cities, information, and the Epigraphic Habit," 140.

¹⁸⁷ Ball, "The (In)visibility of Women." As stated in Chapter 3, Ball records 95 funerary inscriptions at Chester and 29 at York, against the *RIB*'s totals of 93 and 36; the difference likely reflects her cutoff date of 1939 or her inclusion of additional fragmentary material.

¹⁸⁸ Hoffman, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 2.

commemorating the centurion Titus Flavius Flavinus may once have been set into a tower-like monument, comparable to the so-called Tower of Scipio outside Tarragona in Spain, a form found in prominent positions along the empire's approach roads.¹⁸⁹ A fragmentary sphinx from The Mount and a pair of lions from the railway station cemetery point toward the same architectural ambition, sculpture that once crowned monuments now lost.¹⁹⁰ Colchester shows the same instinct at its very beginning, though by import rather than construction. Facilis' tombstone was carved from stone brought from the Continent, its niche and leaf-patterns belonging to the funerary art of the Rhineland.¹⁹¹ York's ambition came later and took a different form, but the same impulse, to mark status through the scale and material of a monument, runs through both sites.

Whereas some funerary monuments showed display through statues, others showed it through the coffin alone. York has produced more lead coffins than anywhere else in Roman Britain, and stone coffins, weighing on average around two tons, were hollowed out at the quarry before being brought into the city.¹⁹² Both represented a real investment, well beyond a simple grave, and were choices only the wealthy could afford. Flavius Bellator's own sarcophagus was one such stone coffin, a less ostentatious form of the same display seen in Flavinus' tower monument. Some burials went further still, encasing the body itself. Gypsum, a white form of calcium sulphate, was sometimes poured into stone and lead coffins and into tile cists, occasionally covering the body completely.¹⁹³ More than forty such burials are known from York and its hinterland, the earliest dating to the late second or early

¹⁸⁹ RIB 675; Ottaway, *Julia Velva*, 246.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁹¹ RIB 200; Catalogue, Appendix C.

¹⁹² Ottaway, *Julia Velva*, 240.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 241.

third century, well before any Christian community existed in the city.¹⁹⁴ Carroll's ongoing research into these burials shows they were reserved for the wealthy, with traces of costly imported dyes and resins recovered from several gypsum casings.¹⁹⁵ Whatever its meaning, gypsum was neither cheap nor simple to use, and its presence marks out these burials as another form of the same costly investment seen in York's coffins and monuments.¹⁹⁶

York's connection to imperial power went further than any other British site. Between 208 and 211 CE, the emperor Septimius Severus and his family lived in the city while he campaigned in the north, and among the cremation burials from this period are two head pots, ceramic vessels shaped and painted as a human face, showing the empress Julia Domna and her son Caracalla.



Figure 12: Head pot depicting Julia Domna or Caracalla, York Museum. Source: Author's own.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Maureen Carroll, "Children among the Dead in York's Gypsum Burials," *Seeing the Dead*, University of York, accessed 7 July 2026, <https://seeingthedead.ac.uk/blog/children-among-dead-yorks-gypsum-burials>.

¹⁹⁶ A. Parker, *The Archaeology of Roman York* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2019), 23.

Nothing like this survives anywhere else in Roman Britain. These are not inscriptions, but the same instinct is at work as in Bellator's sarcophagus or Flavinus's tower monument, using burial itself to show a connection to Rome.

York's citizens spent on death for reasons that cannot be untangled from each other.

Mercurialis and Musicus used their monuments to advertise the citizenship of 212 CE, only recently theirs. Bellator and Flavinus advertised office and rank, statuses that had nothing to do with that grant. The coffins and gypsum burials advertised only wealth, available to anyone rich enough regardless of legal status. This is the weakness in Meyer's model. It explains the decline of the epigraphic habit through a single cause, citizenship, when York's evidence shows several causes acting together. Citizenship, rank, and wealth are tangled together here, and the evidence alone cannot tell us which mattered most. Phang found the same pattern elsewhere: when Severus lifted the ban on soldiers' marriage in 197 CE, commemorated marriages rose only slightly, since the conditions favouring such unions had existed long before the law changed.¹⁹⁷ Legal change, on its own, rarely explains a shift in practices.

4.6 The Test of 212 CE

Colchester offers the clearest test. Its funerary record was already thin by the early second century and had effectively ended well before Caracalla's grant in 212 CE.¹⁹⁸ The habit did not fade there because citizenship stopped mattering, as Meyer suggests. It faded because the army had gone, and a colonia of citizens who had never needed to prove that status did not replicate the habit of setting up funerary epitaphs.

¹⁹⁷ Phang, *The Marriage of Roman Soldiers*, p. 176.

¹⁹⁸ RIB 200; RIB 201; RIB 203; RIB 204; Catalogue, Appendix C.

York cannot be tested against Meyer's thesis as cleanly as Colchester. None of its civilian monuments carry a secure date after 212 CE. Ottaway reads *Mercurialis* and *Musicus*, both of whom took the name *Aurelius*, as men displaying a citizenship newly gained through Caracalla's grant, the pattern Meyer proposes.¹⁹⁹ This is an interpretation, not a fixed date. If Ottaway is right, York supports Meyer's theory rather than refuting it.²⁰⁰

A comparable veteran colony, *Cirta* in North Africa, shows a very different path. Its epigraphic habit ran through three phases, moving from no formal consecration to the *Manes*, through a Severan period when the D.M. formula became standard, to a final phase from the Gordians onward marked by caissons and the first Christian burials.²⁰¹ Only in this last phase did *Cirta*'s habit thin out, gradually, in step with the empire-wide pattern MacMullen identified.²⁰² Colchester saw no such gradual change, the habit stopped almost at once when the founding veterans were killed or scattered in the revolt.

Cirta shows a colony's habit could last for generations on ordinary civic and family life alone, without needing the army. Britain had no such tradition to fall back on, the army brought the habit to Britain in the first place, and at York it persisted only because the army never left, while at Colchester the founding population was wiped out with nothing left behind to sustain it. The army was the only road in, and, once disrupted, the only road out.

4.7 Conclusion

¹⁹⁹ RIB 674; RIB 688; RIB 683; Catalogue, Appendix C

²⁰⁰ Ottaway, *Julia Velva*, 246.

²⁰¹ J.-M. Lassère, "Recherches sur la chronologie des épitaphes païennes de l'Africa," *Antiquités africaines* 7 (1973): 108–121. *Cirta*'s final period edges into the appearance of Christian burial practice, but this dissertation, like *RIB* itself, does not extend to sub-Roman or early Christian material in Britain. The relationship between pagan and later commemoration in Britain, addressed in works such as Nash-Williams's *Early Christian Monuments of Wales*, points to a genuine avenue for further research at doctoral level.

²⁰² MacMullen, "Epigraphic Habit, 242 (fig. iv), based on Lassère, "Chronologie des épitaphes," 7-152.

Colchester and York began the same way, both commemorated first by soldiers and shaped by an army that brought its commemorative habit into a new province. At Colchester, the army relocated and the habit died out decades before Caracalla's grant of 212 CE, so Meyer's theory has nothing to explain there.

York's army never left, and where its evidence can be tested against Meyer directly, the epitaphs of Mercurialis and Musicus appear to support her theory. Yet York's wealthy also invested in tower monuments, coffins, and gypsum burials regardless of citizenship, showing rank and wealth mattered as much as legal status.

The two sites show no single cause explains funerary decline in Roman Britain. What determined whether the habit continued was whether a community, military or civilian, still had reason to keep marking its dead in stone.

5 Conclusion

This dissertation set out to test three explanations for the decline of the 'epigraphic habit' against the evidence of three legionary sites in Roman Britain. Each site, Chester, York and Colchester reveal not one single pattern but three, and the differences between them explain more than any single theory could on its own.

At Chester, the 'epigraphic habit' was carried entirely by the army. No local civilian tradition existed to sustain it once army practice changed, so its decline reflects the empire-wide military pattern MacMullen and Mullen's Latin Now data both identify.

At Colchester, the pattern is starker still. The 'epigraphic habit' had already faded before the Boudican revolt destroyed the colonia in 60 to 61 CE, and it never recovered, even once the town was rebuilt as a functioning Roman city. The veterans who resettled Colchester had served in the army and most likely knew the 'epigraphic habit' well. They did not revive it. The most likely explanation is that commemoration in stone depended less on knowing the custom than on the structures that had sustained it, the regimental burial clubs and the sense of brotherhood that came with active service. Once discharged, veterans lost that structure, while other Roman customs carried on at Colchester without it. The 'epigraphic habit' was tied to the army, not to Roman culture. This challenges Romanisation. A province could keep one Roman custom and drop another.

York shows the opposite outcome. Its army never left, and a civilian population grew up alongside a garrison that remained in place. Commemoration continued there long after Colchester fell silent, and its clearest post-212 CE evidence appears to support Meyer's citizenship thesis rather than challenge it.

Cirta, considered by comparison, shows what Britain lacked. Its 'epigraphic habit' persisted for generations on the strength of an independent civic tradition, sustained by ordinary family and civic life without needing the army at all. Britain had no equivalent tradition to fall back on. The army was the only road in and, once disrupted, the only road out.

No single model, MacMullen's sense of audience, Woolf's monumental writing, or Meyer's citizenship thesis, fully accounts for what happened at all three sites. What determined whether the 'epigraphic habit' continued was whether a community, military or civilian, retained a reason and a structure to keep marking its dead in stone.

This study has been limited to three legionary sites and to the inscriptions catalogued in RIB and CSIR. A wider comparison, drawing in other British military communities or civilian towns without a garrison history, would test whether the Colchester pattern, decline preceding destruction, holds more generally, or whether it is particular to sites where veteran resettlement followed a violent end. That question lies beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it follows directly from what the evidence here has shown.

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Appendix A: A *Corpus* of Funerary Inscriptions from Roman Chester (Deva: *RIB* 475-573).

Compiled from author's own transcription of *RIB* Online, cross-referenced with Chapter 3 discussion. *RIB* 475–487: *Legio II Adiutrix* soldiers. *RIB* 488: *Legio II Augusta* soldier. *RIB* 489–516: *Legio XX Valeria Victrix* soldiers. *RIB* 517–543: soldiers with name surviving legion not specified. *RIB* 544–556: soldiers with name lost. *RIB* 557–568: civilians, women, and children, largely Totenmahl monuments. *RIB* 569–573: highly fragmentary, little or no text surviving. Funerary sequence ends at *RIB* 573; altars begin at *RIB* 574. Full Latin texts and English translations are not reproduced here; see R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, Vol. I (Oxford, 1965), and *RIB* Online, for complete text and translation.

No.	RIB	Commemorated	Detail (unit, origin, age/service, monument, findspot notes)
1	475	Gaius Calventius Celer	Claudian tribe; from Aprus; soldier, <i>Legio II Adiutrix Pia Fidelis</i> ; century of Vibius Clemens
2	476	Gaius Iuventius Capito	Claudian tribe; from Aprus; soldier, <i>Legio II Adiutrix</i> ; aged 40, 7 or 17 years' service
3	477	Lucius Terentius Fuscus	Claudian tribe; from Aprus; soldier, <i>Legio II Adiutrix Pia Fidelis</i>
4	478	Name lost (veteran)	<i>Legio II Adiutrix Pia Fidelis</i> ; veteran; name not preserved
5	479	Quintus Valerius Fronto	Claudian tribe; from Celeia; soldier, <i>Legio II Adiutrix</i> ; aged 50, 25 years' service

6	480	Lucius Valerius Seneca	Claudian tribe; from Savaria; soldier, <i>Legio II Adiutrix</i>
7	481	Name lost	Trooper, <i>Legio II Adiutrix</i> ; century of Petronius Fidus; 11 years' service, aged 25; fragmentary, name not preserved
8	482	Voltimesis Pudens	Son of Gaius; Sergian tribe; from Augusta; trooper, <i>Legio II Adiutrix</i> ; aged 32, 13 years' service
9	483	Name lost	Century of Metius Ferox; aged 31, 13 years' service; rosette decoration in spandrels; name not preserved
10	484	Name lost, ending '...myas'?	Claudian tribe; from Aprus; soldier, <i>Legio II Adiutrix</i> ; very fragmentary
11	485	Name lost	<i>Legio II Adiutrix Pia Fidelis</i> ; died aged 30, 13 years' service; very fragmentary
12	486	Sextus Epidius Pudens	Son of Lucius; Cromentine tribe; from Aquae
13	487	Lucius Annius Marcellus	Son of Lucius; Tromentine tribe; from Veii; broken in half, decorated with half-moon and orb flanked by lunulae
14	488	Gabinus Felix	Soldier, <i>Legio II Augusta Antoniniana</i> ; died aged 40; monument commissioned by his heir; broken and pieced together from four fragments
15	489	Annius Cestius	Soldier, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; aged 18/23/43 (uncertain); altar-type tombstone with jug and patera

16	490	Marcus Aurelius Alexander	Camp prefect, <i>Legio XX</i> ; Syrian tribesman of Osroene; died aged 72; monument commissioned by his heirs
17	491	Marcus Aurelius Nepos	Centurion, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; died aged 50; niche figure with wife (unnamed); monument commissioned by his wife, named as dedicator; <i>sub ascia</i> dedication
18	492	Caecilius Avitus	Optio, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; from Emerita Augusta; aged 34, 15 years' service; monument commissioned by his heir
19	493	Lucius Caiatius Sextinus	Son of Lucius; Galerian tribe; from Lugdunum; soldier, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; fragmentary
20	494	Gaius Cestius Eternicus	Aged 30; soldier, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; 10 years' service; monument commissioned by his heir
21	495	Lucius Ecimius Bellicianus Vitalis	Veteran, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; broken into six fragments
22	496	Florianus	Soldier, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; aged 30; monument commissioned by his heir; very fragmentary
23	497	Furius Maximus	Soldier, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; 22 years' service; monument commissioned by his heir; Totenmahl relief, civilian dress, reclining

24	498	Gaius Iulius Quartus	Son of Gaius; Claudian tribe; from Celeia; soldier, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; century of Titus Flavius Pro[...]; aged 30, 7 years' service
25	499	Gaius Iulius Severus	Horseman, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; died aged 40; relief of horse and rider trampling a barbarian
26	500	Lucius Licinius Valens	Son of Lucius; Tarentine tribe; from Arelate; veteran, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; aged 45; monument commissioned by his heir
27	501	Gaius Lovesius Cadarus	Papyrian tribe; from Emerita; soldier, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; aged 25, 8 years' service; monument commissioned by Frontinius Aquilo, his heir
28	502	Quintus Postumius Solus	Son of Quintus; Papyrian tribe; from Emerita; soldier, <i>Legio XX</i> , senior century; aged 35, 21 years' service
29	503	Publius Rustius Crescens	Fabian tribe; from Brixia; soldier, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; aged 30, 10 years' service; monument commissioned by his heir Groma
30	504	Marcus Sextius Bellicus	Son of Marcus; Claudian tribe; from Claudia Celeia; aged 20 or more

31	505	Titinius Felix	Beneficiarius of the legate, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; aged 22, died aged 45; monument commissioned by his wife and heiress Julia Similina; Amazon figure in relief
32	506	Marcus Ulpianus	Son of Marcus; from Ulpia Traiana; 19 years' service, aged 37; monument commissioned by his heir
33	507	Cocceia Irene	Wife of Gaius Valerius Iustus, actarius, <i>Legio XX</i> ; died aged 30 and a month
34	508	Quintus Vibius Secundus	Aniensian tribe; from Cremona; soldier, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> , century of Octavianus
35	509	Name lost (equestrian centurion)	Public horse; centurion who served in <i>Legio V Macedonica</i> , <i>VIII Augusta</i> , <i>II Augusta</i> , and <i>XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; died aged 61; monument commissioned by his freedman and heir Aristio
36	510	Name lost, ending '...stus'	Standard-bearer (<i>signifer</i>), <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; monument commissioned by his heir
37	511	Name lost	From Celeia; soldier, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; aged 40, 20 years' service; monument commissioned by his heir
38	512	Name lost	Palatine tribe; from Oea; soldier, <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; fragmentary
39	513	Name lost	Century of [...]sarco[...]; <i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; very fragmentary

40	514	Name lost	<i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; 17 years' service; monument commissioned by his heir
41	515	Name lost	<i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; very fragmentary, only top-right corner survives
42	516	Name lost	<i>Legio XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; monument commissioned by his heir; very fragmentary
43	517	Annius Felix	Veteran; died aged 80; iconography chiselled down (cf. Clay's iconoclasm argument)
44	518	Lucius Antestius Sabinus	Son of Lucius; Sergian tribe; from Corduba; upper part in five fragments
45	519	Marcus Apronius	Son of Marcus; Fabian tribe; from Berytus; monumental tomb with fluted pilasters and ribbon-swig decoration
46	520	Gaius Attius Rufinus	Reused as building stone during excavation; margins chiselled off
47	521	Aurelius Diogenes	<i>Imaginifer</i> , <i>Legio XX</i> ; headless; standard's imperial effigy defaced
48	522	Aurelius Lucius	Horseman; reclining Totenmahl relief; slave and severed head depicted; monument commissioned by his heir; inscription chiselled off

49	523	Caecilius Donatus	Bessian tribesman; served 26 years, died aged 40; Totenmahl relief with wife reclining behind him
50	524	Lucius Camulius Albanus	Son of Lucius; Stellatine tribe; from the Taurine district
51	525	Decimus Capienius Urbicus	Volturnian tribe; from Vienna; standard-bearer; 24 years' service, aged 44; monument commissioned by his heir
52	526	Cassius Secundus	Honourably discharged; died aged 80; dedicated to his (unnamed) husband
53	527	Marcus Cluvius Valentius	Son of Marcus; Aniensian tribe; from Forum Iulii
54	528	Quintus Cornelius	Bust of the deceased as a funerary mask, flanked by kilted attendant figures (probable slaves)
55	529	Quintus Cornelius	Son of Quintus; rosette and crescent-moon decoration; very fragmentary
56	530	Quintus Cornelius	Son of Quintus; Aniensian tribe; gabled, rosettes above the die
57	531	Quintus Domitius Optatus	Son of Quintus; Claudian tribe; from Virunum
58	532	Gaius Iulius Marullinus	Beneficiarius of a military tribune; died aged 45; monument commissioned by his heir

59	533	Quintus Iunius November	Died aged 70+; monument commissioned by Iulius Liberalis
60	534	Gaius Licinius	Veteran; died aged 80+; Aulus Candidus had charge of erecting it
61	535	Quintus Longinius Laetus	Pomentine tribe; from Lucus; 15 years' service; century of Cornelius Severus
62	536	Gaius Publilius Mi[...]	Sergian tribe; fragment from the middle top
63	537	Lucius Festinius Probus	Son, died aged 2 years, 29 days; monument commissioned by his father Lucius Sempronius Probianus
64	538	Sextus Simil[...]	Son of Sextus; Fabian tribe; from Brixia; relief of horse and rider with attendant, Greek-influenced style; lion-and-goat allegory of death above
65	539	Gaius Valerius	Soldier; century of Postumius; Galerian tribe; broken into four fragments
66	540	Gaius Valerius	Son of Gaius; Claudian tribe; soldier; upper part worn
67	541	Marcus Valerius Martialis	Son of Marcus; Claudian tribe; originally bore a relief of a horseman riding down a fallen barbarian
68	542	Lucius Valerius Pud[...]	Son of Lucius; from Salaria; gable-topped with foliate ornament

69	543	Voconia Nigrina and Gaius Valerius Victor	Husband and wife shown standing side by side in the panel
70	544	Name lost (optio)	Serving in the century of Lucilius Ingenuus Ianus, awaiting promotion to centurion; died by shipwreck; two aediculae with double doors depicted, probably representing a tomb
71	545	Name lost (missicius)	From [...]ua; <i>beneficiarius</i> of a military tribune; served 23 years, died aged 45
72	546	Name lost	Son of Gaius; Claudian tribe; from Savaria; died aged 30; only top-right corner survives
73	547	Name lost	From Savaria; died aged 40, 20+ years' service; triangular fragment, no margins intact
74	548	Name lost	Aged 25, 10 years' service; extremely fragmentary
75	549	Gaius [...]	Gable decorated with an eight-spoked wheel and rosettes; only upper part survives
76	550	Name lost	Cavalryman galloping right over a defaced barbarian figure; rider's head defaced
77	551	Name lost	Relief of horse's legs and a dying barbarian grasping the horse's leg; very fragmentary
78	552	Name lost	Galerian tribe; small fragment with moulded border

79	553	Name lost	Monument commissioned by his son and heir; lower part only, upper part broken off
80	554	[Ti]berius?	Died aged 70; monument commissioned by his heir per his will; chip-carved border
81	555	Name lost	Buried in his own ground; lower part broken vertically
82	556	Name lost	Monument commissioned by his heir; fragment from lower-left corner, originally panelled
83	557	Name lost	Aged 26; cavalry trooper (<i>vexillarius</i>); monument commissioned by his brother
84	558	Flavius Callimorphus and Serapion	Callimorphus died aged 42, Serapion died aged 3y 6m; monument commissioned by Theseus, brother and son; Totenmahl scene, amphora and three-legged table depicted
85	559	Etacontius	Freedman; monument commissioned by his patron Gaius Asurius Fortis; altar-shaped stone
86	560	Atilianus, Antiatilianus, and Protus	Atilianus and Antiatilianus aged 10; Protus aged 12; monument commissioned by their master Pompeius Optatus
87	561	Hermagoras and Felicissimus	Brothers, shown together in relief wearing tunics; only lower-left portion survives

88	562	Curatia Dinysia	Died aged 40; monument commissioned by her heir; elaborate Totenmahl relief with Tritons and doves; her face defaced
89	563	Fesonia Severiana	Died aged 25; Totenmahl relief with attendant figure and hand mirror
90	564	Domitia Saturnina	Died aged 41; sub ascia (mason's tools: adze, pick, plummet) shown on the left side; figures much mutilated
91	565	Flavia Saturnina	Totenmahl banquet scene; only right margin intact, most of the relief lost
92	566	Restita and Martia	Two girls; Restita died aged 7, Martia died aged 3; monument commissioned by their (unnamed) parents; Totenmahl relief with a large shell motif
93	567	Name lost	Totenmahl relief, lady reclining with a child reaching toward her, probably a slave; hammer and set square shown at the side
94	568	Name lost	Totenmahl relief with dolphins and a large shell; lady reclining, cup clasped to her chest; broken into four fragments
95	569	Name lost	Monument commissioned under the charge of Iulius Secundus, the heir; very fragmentary
96	570	Name lost	Too fragmentary for any inscription to survive

97	571	Name lost	Too fragmentary to make sense of the inscription
98	572	Name lost	Only the numeral sequence '15111' survives
99	573	Name lost	Welsh slate; no text survives

Appendix B: *Corpus* of Funerary Inscriptions from Roman York (Eboracum).

Total entries: 36. Full Latin texts and English translations are not reproduced here; see R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, Vol. I (Oxford, 1965), and RIB Online, for complete text and translation.

No.	RIB	Commemorated	Detail (status, findspot, monument notes)
1	670	Aurelius Super	Centurion, <i>Legio VI</i> ; died aged 38 years 4 months 13 days; monument commissioned by his wife Aurelia Censorina; coffin, Lowering Yard, York Castle
2	671	Lucius Bebius Crescens	From Augusta (Augsburg); soldier, <i>Legio VI Pia Fidelis</i> ; aged 43, 23 years' service; monument commissioned by his heir; tombstone, Dalton Terrace
3	672	Bassaeus Julius and his son Felix	Commemorated together; findspot north wall, new railway station; limestone
4	673	Lucius Duccius Rufinus	Son of Lucius; Voltinian tribe; from Vienne; standard-bearer (<i>signifer</i>), <i>Legio IX</i> ; died aged 28; figured tombstone, standard-bearer with maniple standard; Trinity Gardens, Micklegate

5	674	Flavius Bellator	Decurion of the colonia of York; died aged 29; skeleton found with an official gold ring set with a ruby; coffin, near Scarborough railway bridge
6	675	Titus Flavius Flavinus	Centurion, <i>Legio VI Victrix</i> ; monument commissioned by his heir Classicius Aprilis before his own death; legion's cognomen unusually omitted; findspot Rawcliffe Lane
7	676	Julia Secunda	Fragmentary; findspot The Mount
8	677	Valerius Theodorianus	From Nomentum; died aged 35 years 6 months; monument commissioned by his mother and heir Aemilia Theodora; coffin, The Mount
9	678	Marcus Verecundius Diogenes	Sevir of the colonia of York; also a tribesman of the Bituriges Cubi and of the Morini; commissioned the monument for himself in his own lifetime; coffin, millstone grit, findspot lost
10	679	[...]lius [...]Crescens	Veteran; fragmentary, found in two parts; Driffild collection, The Mount
11	680	Gaius [...]	Son of Gaius; Claudian tribe; from Novaria; soldier, <i>Legio IX Hispana</i> ; monument commissioned by his heirs and freedmen; must have died before c. AD

			120, when Legio VI replaced <i>Legio IX</i> ; findspot The Mount
12	681	Hyllus	Described as a beloved foster-child (alumnus); fragmentary; north wall, new railway station
13	682	Aelia Aeliana	Totenmahl relief; couch scene with reclining man, wife, and young girl; shell-niche with dolphin spandrels; findspot new railway station
14	683	Aelia Severa	<i>Honesta femina</i> (wife of a local senator); formerly wife of Caecilius Rufus; died aged 27y 9months 4days; monument commissioned by Caecilius Musicus, a freedman; coffin later reused for a male burial; cover-slab is RIB 685; findspot The Mount
15	684	Corellia Optata	Died aged 13; verse epitaph in hexameters; monument commissioned by her father Quintus Corellius Fortis; ashes held in a lead-sealed glass vessel; one of only two known verse funerary epitaphs from Roman Britain; findspot The Mount
16	685	Flavia Augustina, with her children Saenius Augustinus and an unnamed daughter	Flavia Augustina died aged 39 years 7 months 11 days; her son Saenius Augustinus died aged 1 year 3 days; her daughter died aged 1year 9 months 5 days; monument commissioned by her husband Gaius

			Aeresius Saenus, a veteran of <i>Legio VI Victrix</i> ; cover-slab to coffin RIB 683; findspot The Mount
17	686	Julia Brica and Sempronia Martina	Julia Brica aged 31, Sempronia Martina aged 6; monument commissioned by Sempronius Martinus; findspot site of the Mount Hotel, near RIB 693
18	687	Julia Fortunata	From Sardinia; described as a loyal wife (<i>fida coniunx</i>) to her husband Verecundius Diogenes; coffin found within a few metres of RIB 674, new railway station
19	688	Julia Velva	Died aged 50; monument commissioned by her heir Aurelius Mercurialis, who also made it for himself and his family in his own lifetime; name possibly Celtic in origin; Totenmahl relief; findspot The Mount to South Bank Road
20	689	Mantinia Maerica and her mother Candida Barita	Monument commissioned by Marcus Aurinius Simnus; findspot within 2m of RIB 688
21	690	Simplicia Florentina	Died aged 10 months; monument commissioned by her father Felicius Simplex, centurion of <i>Legio VI Victrix</i> ; coffin, skeleton in gypsum; findspot The Mount area

22	691	Ulpia Felicissima	Died aged 23years 11months and some days; monument commissioned by her parents Ulpius Felix and [...] Andronica; lead canister; findspot new railway station
23	692	Decimina	Daughter of Decimus; fragmentary; findspot St Mary's Convent, Micklegate Bar
24	693	Name lost (wife)	Described as most dutiful (coniunx piissima); monument commissioned by her husband; fragmentary; findspot site of the Mount Hotel, with RIB 686
25	694	Minna [...]	Fragmentary; findspot wall outside Micklegate Bar
26	695	Eglecta and her son Crescens	Eglecta aged 30, Crescens aged 3, buried together; monument commissioned by Antonius Stephanus, her husband; findspot All Saints' Church, North Street
27	696	Name lost (child)	Died aged 13; monument commissioned in part by mother Vitellia Procula as heir; later Christian addition (Ave Maria); findspot near Ebor Street, Clementhorpe
28	699	Name lost	Fragmentary; findspot York and North Midland Railway
29	702	Name lost	Fragmentary; findspot boundary wall to The Mount, road-widening

30	704	Name lost, ending '...vius Fe-'	Fragmentary; findspot The Mount
31	705	Name lost, possibly '[S]abinia' or '[S]abrina'	Fragmentary; findspot The Mount
32	3202	Julia Victorina and Constantius	Julia Victorina died aged 29 years 2 months 15 days; Constantius died aged 4y 11m 21d; monument commissioned by Septimius Lupianus, centurion and former <i>evocatus</i> , for his wife and son; findspot Castle Yard, near <i>RIB</i> 670
33	3203	Marcus Aurelius(?) Irenaeus	Decurion of the colonia of Eboracum; monument commissioned very devotedly; reused for a later medieval burial; findspot 46–54 Fishergate
34	3204	Name lost	Coffin lid bearing only the <i>Dis Manibus</i> formula; findspot cemetery west of the colonia, present railway station
35	3205	Gaudentius (named as neighbour in the text)	Fragmentary; findspot in situ at York Minster
36	3206	Possibly Primus (uncertain)	Fragmentary; findspot York

Appendix C: *Corpus* of Funerary Inscriptions from Roman Colchester (Camulodonum).

Status column shows agreement with dissertation text (Chapter 4) where applicable. Entries marked 'Not independently verified' are recorded here as supplied and have not been cross-checked against RIB Online. Full Latin texts and English translations are not reproduced here; see R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, Vol. I (Oxford, 1965), and RIB Online, for complete text and translation.

No.	RIB	Deceased	Detail	Status
1	200	Marcus Favonius Facilis	Centurion, XX <i>Legion</i> ; Pollian voting tribe; no origin stated; monument commissioned by freedmen Verecundus and Novicius; hic situs est, no Dis Manibus; figured tombstone, Lothringer freestone	Verified (Ch.4, 4.2)
2	201	Longinus Sdapeze, son of Matucus	Duplicarius, <i>Ala I Thracum</i> ; from Sardica, Thrace; aged 40, 15 years' service; monument commissioned by heirs per his will; figured cavalry tombstone, rider over defeated enemy	Verified (Ch.4, 4.2)

3	202	[Macr]ius (name partly lost, ending -us)	Roman knight (eques Romanus); died aged 20; monument commissioned by his wife Valeria Frontina and by Florius Fidelis; lower portion of Purbeck-marble tombstone	Verified (checked against <i>RIB</i> Online)
4	203	Name lost	Centurion; served in <i>Legio II Adiutrix, III Augusta</i> , and <i>XX Valeria Victrix</i> ; from Nicaea, Bithynia; Purbeck marble with traces of red paint	Consistent with Ch.4, 4.3 — name and full legion list not independently cross-checked
5	204	Possibly Mucianus (uncertain)	"Venerable young man"; <i>ascia</i> between letters of <i>Dis Manibus</i> ; Purbeck marble	Consistent with Ch.4, 4.3 — identification marked uncertain in <i>RIB</i> itself
6	205	Name lost	Auxiliary soldier, <i>Cohors I Va</i> [...] (possibly Vangiones); monument apparently funded <i>ex aere collato</i> (collected contributions)	Not independently verified

7	206	Aurel[...]	Limestone block from a monumental tomb; only name-start and age formula survive	Not independently verified
8	207	Name lost (probable infant)	<i>Dies XXVI</i> (26 days) survives; preceding age formula lost; small Purbeck-marble fragment	Not independently verified
9	208	Name lost (possibly female)	Age formula: ten or more years; two fragments, possibly part of a decorative frieze	Not independently verified
10	3130	Gaius S[...] Ro[...]	Found near the road entering Colchester through Balcerne Gate; name only partly preserved, no status recoverable	Not independently verified
11	3131	Name lost	Three non-joining Purbeck-marble fragments; found in boundary ditch of an extramural cemetery; text too incomplete to identify	Not independently verified
12	3132	Possibly Titus [...] (uncertain)	Triangular Purbeck-marble fragment, Balcerne Lane; identification as a tombstone rest mainly on findspot; <i>RIB</i> notes	Not independently verified — <i>RIB</i> itself flags this as uncertain

			the surviving mark may not certainly be a letter	funerary evidence
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