

*Department of Humanities, Northumbria University*

**Honours Dissertation**

**Tribal Resistance in Northern England and Scotland from  
the Roman Conquest to the Building of Hadrian's Wall,  
43-122 AD**

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# Introduction

This dissertation will focus on three key themes relating to the tribal resistance to Rome in the North of England and Scotland, ranging from the relationship between the Celtic tribes, to the transition in resistance strategy seen through the construction of Roman fortresses. Exploring these aspects of the tribal resistance will enable a broader understanding of how the resistance failed in Northern England but was successful in Scotland. Hadrian's Wall was built in 122 AD as an admission of the limitations of the Roman Empire – they could not subjugate the Scottish population and thus sought to block contact between the 'barbarians' north of the wall from the Romanised tribes in England.<sup>1</sup> Looking at tribal interactions and their engagements with the Romans will allow conclusions to be drawn as to whether the tribal resistance could have been successful, and where its key failures lie. This dissertation will argue that the tribal resistance failed in Northern England due to the deeply entrenched factional schisms present within the largest tribe – the *Brigantes* – while while resistance proved to be successful in Scotland as a result of a different resistance strategy after losses against the Romans, with a specific focus on the Battle of Mons Graupius.

The period chosen has been heavily documented by the historian Tacitus.<sup>2</sup> This is due to his close relationship with Governor Agricola whose military career saw him at the forefront of Roman expansion into Northern Britain. The accuracy of Tacitus' accounts is questionable as his readership 'wanted to know about morale, heroism, military vigour and

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<sup>1</sup> James Crow, 'The Northern Frontier of Britain from Trajan to Antoninus Pius: Roman Builders and Native Britons' in Malcolm Todd, *A Companion to Roman Britain* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2008), p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola and Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Tacitus, *Annals of Imperial Rome* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973); Tacitus, *The Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

persistence; locational information was only useful in so far as it enhanced the communication of human endeavour'.<sup>3</sup> This further results in gaps in our knowledge of the Roman campaigns into Northern England and Scotland and the subsequent tribal response. Highlighted by the fact the only detailed account of a battle by Agricola is that of the Battle of Mons Graupius. Even then there are gaps in our knowledge as Tacitus never specified the location of the battle – leaving historians to speculate as to its whereabouts. In an attempt to compensate for a lack of information regarding the Roman expansion through Northern England, archaeological evidence will be used in conjunction with the literary sources to allow insights as to whether Tacitus' claims on a specific region or tribe can be applied to tribes in Northern England and Scotland. Furthermore, archaeological reports will be utilised to indicate how Roman building evolved over the period, this will give important indications as to the native's attitudes towards the Romans in that specific area. As seen with Tacitus, the nature of archaeological reports and resources are epigraphic, making the dating of evidence somewhat problematic and thus producing challenges for the contextualisation of the evidence.

Constant discovery of new evidence means that previously held interpretations of the tribes have become redundant. John Clarke has concluded that the evidence of burnt materials at a number of Roman fortresses signified an enemy attack resulting in their withdrawal from the garrison.<sup>4</sup> But this burnt material does not necessarily signify an enemy attack but can also be interpreted as a remodelling – and this will be discussed further in Chapter Three. This is further highlighted in the Wheeler excavation of fort Stanwick, where an attempt was made to marry the fort to the events surrounding Venutius rebelling against

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<sup>3</sup> David Shotter, *Roman Britain* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> John Clarke, 'Roman and Native, A.D. 80-122' in Ian A. Richmond (ed.), *Roman and Native in North Britain* (London: Nelson, 1958), p. 58.

Queen Cartimandua of the *Brigantes* – discussed in Chapter One.<sup>5</sup> Literature surrounding tribal activity fails to draw on comparisons between tribes, or evaluates their interactions. A key example of this is *The Parisi: Britons and Romans in Eastern Yorkshire*.<sup>6</sup> Due to a lack of literature focussing on tribal resistance, this dissertation will seek to address this gap.

The first chapter will look at tribal relationships through their interactions and adoption of similar tribal cultures. This has been chosen, as interaction between tribal kingdoms had a direct bearing on the effectiveness of resisting Roman occupation. The primary focus of this chapter is on the *Parisi* and *Brigantes* tribe in Northern England, the reason being there is very little evidence on the other tribes in Northern Britain illustrating tribal relationships. The *Parisi* will be looked at in terms of their unique culture and receptiveness to Roman trade, while the *Brigantes* is looked at in terms of its political stability through accounts by Tacitus. It argues that tribal tensions with the *Brigantes* and the lack of stable infrastructure in the tribes were the principal reason for the failure of the Northern England resistance. Additionally, the political situation of the Northern British tribes will be looked at in a European context, to establish whether a lack of tribal interactions was isolated to Northern Britain.

The heavily documented Battle of Mons Graupius by Tacitus is the focus of the second chapter, with the intent to analyse the capabilities of the tribes when it came to physically resisting the Romans. A comparative analysis of the *Caledonii* and the Roman army will consider the main factor in the subsequent defeat of the *Caledonii* and the implications this had on succeeding resistance efforts. This chapter looks at themes ranging from weapons and battle strategy to military leadership. Furthermore, archaeological

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<sup>5</sup> Mortimer Wheeler, 'The Brigantian Fortifications at Stanwick, North Yorkshire' in R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford (ed.), *Recent Archaeological Excavations in Britain: Selected excavations 1939-1955 with a chapter on recent air-reconnaissance* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 60.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Halkon, *The Parisi: Britons and Romans in Eastern Yorkshire* (Stroud: The History Press, 2013).

evidence will be looked at from regions occupied by other tribes to establish whether the actions of the *Caledonii* can be seen in other areas – thus implying the tribes had a common battle strategy. Resulting in the argument that Agricola was instrumental to the victory of the Romans but ultimately the defeat of the *Caledonii* was somewhat inevitable. The battle, however, is seen as a turning point in resistance strategy by the tribes in Scotland.

Tribal resistance strategy began to manifest itself in the form of passive resistance after the Battle of Mons Graupius. In order to establish this, Roman fortresses are analysed across a geographically diverse area. The analysis is based primarily on archaeological reports, looking at themes ranging from defences to civilian settlements that will give an indication as to the passivity of the area. In doing so, it reaches a conclusion as to why Hadrian's Wall was built and highlights the instability of the so-called Romanised areas in Northern England. Furthermore, the chapter will also briefly look at the forts along the Danube region of the Empire to establish if the passive resistance had also manifested itself in other areas of the Empire.

Overall, this dissertation explores the evolution of tribal resistance in Northern England and Scotland up to the building of Hadrian's Wall – effectively an admittance of Rome's failure to subjugate Britain. Drawing on all of the above themes to argue that Northern England was consolidated easily due to fundamental cultural differences and political instabilities. While in Scotland, the Battle of Mons Graupius was a turning point in the resistance strategy, moving towards resisting through the rejection of Romanisation.

# Chapter One

## Tribal Relations

In order to establish why the resistance failed, it is important to look at the tribes. The Romans chose to conquer Britain by supressing each tribe individually and only moving on once that tribe was subjugated. This was to prevent them having to fight on multiple fronts, which resulted in the argument that the resistance would have worked if the tribes had fought in unison.<sup>7</sup> To establish whether the lack of cooperation between the tribes was a fundamental flaw with the resistance strategy, it needs to be assessed whether the tribes had any common factors that would unite them or if they each had their own individual identities.

The chapter looks at both the *Parisi* and the *Brigantes* tribes in an attempt to better our understanding of the political situation of the time. It looks at their relationships with neighbouring tribes and cultural traditions, to try and recognise whether the tribes isolated themselves, or if relationships existed through the analysis of archaeological evidence and literary sources. Giving a better understanding of the political context of the First Century, it will present a clearer picture of whether tribes uniting in resistance to Rome was a possibility or if subjugation of the tribes was inevitable. The latter part of the chapter looks deeper into the composition of the *Brigantes* tribe and the stability of its political structure. This is important because the breakdown of the *Brigantes* as a result of the Civil War had enormous repercussions on the resistance effort. How can the resistance to Roman expansion be effective when its biggest tribe was fighting amongst itself? Arguing that the

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<sup>7</sup> W. S. Hanson and D. B. Campbell, 'The Brigantes: From Clientage to Conquest', *Britannia*, Vol. 17 (1986), p. 73.

internal divisions and instability seriously undermined the resistance, as it made Agricola's expansion northwards easier with the biggest tribe broken. Concerning the *Brigantes*, evidence is heavily reliant on Tacitus, giving important insights into events. However, 'the primary goal of Tacitus was to present an account of history which was relevant and of interest to his Roman readership, not to historians in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.'<sup>8</sup> Although Tacitus is useful for giving key information on events we would otherwise not know about, the accuracy in his descriptions are debated amongst historians, which will be discussed further.

## Parisi

The *Parisi* tribe of East Yorkshire had a unique culture to that of the rest of Britain. This was possibly a result of exposure to Romanised tribes in Europe, which is known as a result of the presence of Roman pottery in the area even before the Roman conquest in 48AD<sup>9</sup>. The Arras Culture is only identified with the *Parisi* in Britain but is also associated with tribes on the continent. Burial rites that saw people buried alongside a chariot were one of the key features of Arras Culture.<sup>10</sup> Highlighting a shared identity throughout the region through the ritual burying of their dead, the fact that this type of burial was not found anywhere else indicates tribal interactions were limited. Furthermore, the '*Parisi* maintained a local pre-eminence long enough to deny the communities peripheral to themselves access to the sepulchral traditions which they had made their own'.<sup>11</sup> Evidence suggests a limited amount of communication between tribes, but also implies the tribes did not like each other through their unwillingness to allow neighbouring tribes to adopt their customs. Ritualistic

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<sup>8</sup> Stuart Laycock, *Britannia the Failed State: Tribal Conflict and the End of Roman Britain* (New York: The History Press, 2012), p. 104.

<sup>9</sup> Halkon, *The Parisi*, p. 206.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p.133.

<sup>11</sup> N. J. Highham, 'Brigantia Revisited', *Northern History*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1987), p. 5.



human burials have also been discovered in *Brigantian* territory but the burial of adults and infants in the same graves suggests the following of different ritual practices.<sup>12</sup> A singular tribal identity existed for East Yorkshire; this impacted Roman expansion throughout the First Century. The negative relationships present between neighbouring tribes mean that it would have been unlikely for a unified front to be formed, making the fall of the tribal kingdoms inevitable. Further insight into the *Parisi's* relationships with other tribes – more specifically the *Brigantes* – can be illustrated through weapon hoards.

The South Cave weapons cache consisted of five swords and 33 spearheads, dated around 70 AD, found buried in a pre-existing boundary of a late iron age/early Roman-British settlement.<sup>13</sup> This further indicates the tribal relationships and identities throughout the First Century. Due to the limitations of archaeological sources, it is not known why the hoard was buried or who buried it. The eroding of iron over time, combined with the vast amount of weapons buried in this single hoard, implies that it was not intended to be retrieved. This leads to the belief that the hoard was a post-battle deposition of weapons from the tribal settlement.<sup>14</sup> A large concentration of weapons in the area suggests instability. During this period, Cartimandua had been overthrown by Venutius in AD 69 in the *Brigantian* Civil War, who was then subsequently suppressed by Governor Cerialis in 71 AD. Indicating the weapons were likely used for fighting the *Brigantes* when they were a rebel state under Venutius. This setback in resistance to Rome highlights an important flaw in the tribal resistance strategy. The key to preventing Roman expansion was cooperation.

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<sup>12</sup> C. Haselgrove et al., 'Stanwick, North Yorkshire, Part 3: Excavations on earthworks sites 1981-86', *Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 143 (1990), p. 64.

<sup>13</sup> *A Late Iron Age Weapons Cache, East Yorkshire* (2003)  
[<http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/culture/museums/collections/detail.php?module=publications&type=related&kv=256>] Accessed: 06/12/2016

<sup>14</sup> Richard Hingley, 'The Deposition of Iron Age Objects in Britain During the Later Prehistoric and Roman Periods: Contextual Analysis and the Significance of Iron', *Britannia*, Vol. 37 (2006), p. 215.

However, differences in cultural identity mean it is unlikely that the *Parisi* would have united with the northern tribes.

The receptiveness of the *Parisi* towards the Romans is heavily debated amongst historians. A strong presence of trade with the Romanised continent corroborates the argument they would be more susceptible to Roman rule. This can also be implied through the low concentration of forts and garrisons in the region, suggesting the territory was used as a starting point for invasion further north. However, more recent research has brought to light new interpretations of the nature of the *Parisi* tribe. The deposition of weapons in *Parisi* graves and chalk figurines of armed men suggests the presence of a 'warrior cult'.<sup>15</sup> *Parisi* translates to 'spear people', this infers a violent nature, thus not being as passive as initially thought. The high concentration of weapon discoveries in the region also presents a strong case against the historians' widely conceived argument that they were welcoming to Rome, and were more violent than originally perceived. Furthermore, the low concentration of forts and garrisons highlight the strategic location of the territory. The 'presence of Flavian forts at Hayton, Brough, Malton and Staxton and the marching camp at Buttercrambe can be interpreted as demonstrating the relations between the indigenous population and Rome may not have been as peaceful as we thought'.<sup>16</sup> The strategically important locations of these forts, insinuates the Romans felt threatened from attacks by the *Parisi*. Recent archaeological discoveries have a strong argument to suggest the *Parisi* were in fact of a violent nature. As a result of limitations with evidence, it cannot be said with certainty the *Parisi* were violent towards occupying Romans. Instead, with the most significant weaponry discovery being located close to the border with *Brigantia*, it can only

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<sup>15</sup> Highham, 'Brigantia Revisited', p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Halkon, *The Parisi*, p. 225.

lead us to assume that there were possible tribal conflicts occurring throughout the Roman expansion campaign. Although evidence does not tell us about resistance to Rome in this region, there is evidence of tribal hostilities – a major factor in the failure of the resistance. This appeared to be the case for other tribes in Northern Britain as well, further reflected in the schisms in the *Brigantes* tribe: ‘A protective ring of forts was put in place around the *Parisi* of East Yorkshire from Brough-on-Humber and centring on a vexillation-fortress at Malton in order to shield them from (presumably) the *Brigantes*.’<sup>17</sup>

### **Brigantes**

The *Brigantes* behaved in a manner that suggests that they did not want relationships with other tribes. Highlighted by Cartimandua betraying Caratacus,

Her authority had lately increased, since she had betrayed King Caratacus into the hands of the Romans, and was thus considered to have provided the Emperor Claudius with his triumph.<sup>18</sup>

Cartimandua’s betrayal highlights the political situation of the time: she handed over Caratacus in order to gain favour and support from Rome. The way she ruthlessly handed him over in chains to Roman officials shows that she did not care for other tribes, betraying Caratacus ensured she held her throne through an allegiance with the Romans. The first – and only – priority of the tribes appears to have been their own survival; they did not seem to care if other tribes had been conquered by the Romans. As long as they still maintained their power, they would not intervene. Tribal unity was not considered, even though it would be mutually beneficial to all tribes and could result in the expulsion of Romans from Northern Britain. The fact Cartimandua showed a stronger allegiance to Rome than other

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<sup>17</sup> David Shotter, ‘Petillius Cerialis in Northern Britain’, *Northern History*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (2000), p. 192.

<sup>18</sup> Tacitus, *The Histories*, p. 143.

Britons suggests she felt her throne was under threat; she needed her authority secured through Roman support: 'Cartimandua was a collaborator, a client-queen who relied on Roman support and reciprocated by delivering freedom fighters to Roman justice.'<sup>19</sup> Resulting in a setback for tribal resistance, her actions would have made other leaders wary of tribal collaboration through fear of betrayal. Tribesmen questioning her authority, is reflected by Tacitus' criticism of female leaders.<sup>20</sup> Her behaviour was seen to exacerbate factional schisms that pre-existed within the *Brigantes*.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, handing Caratacus over to Rome angered the *Brigantes* to the point of being driven to a civil war, which suggests they had a desire to protect Caratacus. Implying the tribesmen of *Brigantia* were willing to unite alongside Caratacus to fight the Romans. To some extent, Cartimandua can be held responsible for the failure of the resistance, as she put the security of her throne above that of the resistance to the Romans. The Romans needed the support of the *Brigantes* so that they were not fighting on two fronts, being in an alliance with the largest tribe in Northern Britain meant that they were able to quash rebellions in Wales before moving northwards.<sup>22</sup> This was a common Roman battle strategy; they did not overextend their army to the point where both frontiers are under threat – they consolidated, then conquered. Ultimately, Cartimandua was helping the Romans conquer her own kingdom; she believed her allegiance with Rome would secure her authority and throne, when in fact it was one of the main reasons for her downfall. This was shown by the outbreak of civil war in AD 51 after surrendering Caratacus.<sup>23</sup> It serves to

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<sup>19</sup> Miranda Aldhouse-Green, *Boudicca Britannia: Rebel, war-leader and Queen* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006), p. 120.

<sup>20</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, p. 269

<sup>21</sup> Aldhouse-Green, *Boudicca*, p. 128.

<sup>22</sup> Hanson and Campbell, 'Clientage to Conquest', p. 73.

<sup>23</sup> Higham, 'Brigantia Revisited' (1987), p. 11.

further highlight the importance of unity, and the fact that opposition to Rome was never unified meant it was doomed from the beginning.

The difficulties in unifying diverse tribes, each bringing their own culture and identities, made the task of uniting the tribes harder – arguably impossible. It is widely accepted by most historians that the *Brigantes* were in fact a federation of tribes which was thought to have been brought together by Cartimandua's marriage to Venutius – a leader of a lesser tribe.<sup>24</sup> With the large scale of the tribe, it was impossible to bring them together under a centralised command, making factional disputes commonplace.<sup>25</sup> Betraying Caratacus and Cartimandua's adultery with Vellocatus – her husband's armour-bearer – was speeding up the destruction of the tribal kingdoms. The Civil War against Venutius spanning the decade 70 AD, reflects deep divisions that would be expected tribesmen divided by tribal loyalties, and whose territory and resources were so diverse.<sup>26</sup>

The events leading up to the Civil War in *Brigantia* was breaking the tribe up further. Lack of a uniform *Brigantian* identity, made resisting the Roman invasion practically impossible, no commonality in the tribe made factional schisms inevitable. This made Roman expansion into Northern England easier because the biggest tribe, the *Brigantes* – the only real threat to the Roman army had destroyed itself.

The instability of the *Brigantian* tribe is further illustrated by tribal settlements in the area. Excavations at Stanwick by Wheeler attempted to connect the fortress to the Brigantian Civil War, in which it acted as a rallying place for the anti-Roman resistance under Venutius.<sup>27</sup> However, 'the demands of modern farming and development in the surrounding

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Hanson and Campbell, 'Clientage to Conquest', p. 74.

<sup>26</sup> Barry Cunliffe, *Iron Age Communities in Britain: An Account of England, Scotland and Wales from 7 BC to the Roman Conquest* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 1991), p. 214.

<sup>27</sup> Wheeler, 'Stanwick Excavation', p. 60.

area, indeed, the north-west entrance today is hardly recognisable as the same place as in the photographs of 1951'.<sup>28</sup> The constantly evolving landscape makes dating somewhat problematic, additionally Wheeler's excavation did not answer the questions of the nature and function of Stanwick.<sup>29</sup> The large size of the fortress in comparison to other tribal settlements indicate the importance of the fort to the *Brigantes* – suggesting the possibility of Stanwick being somewhat of a tribal capital as opposed to a rallying point used by Venutius. This is further indicated by the heavily defended nature of the fortress; evidence shows the defences did not last long after the First Century highlighting the strong tribal nature of the fort.<sup>30</sup> With defensive nature of the settlement, shows the instability of the area – supporting the tribesmen's hostile attitudes towards Catimandua as a result of her behaviour during the Roman conquest.

Distinct tribal identities are not isolated to the British Isles, Tacitus' writings give a well-documented account as to most of the Germanic tribes – clearly articulating their distinguishing factors. For example, 'the Tencteri, over and above the general military distinction, excel in the art of horsemanship. The fame of the Chatti as infantry-men is no greater than that of the Tencteri as cavalry.'<sup>31</sup> Little interaction between tribes on the continent is the same reason as the lack of contact between the British tribes; their cultures were too varied for them to be able to combine. This is further highlighted by Tacitus' observation of the lack of intermarriage in the Germanic tribes, thus keeping their race pure.<sup>32</sup> The tribes had no need to interact as they were self-sufficient and showed no desire

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<sup>28</sup> Haselgrove et al., 'Stanwick, Part 3', p. 41.

<sup>29</sup> C. Haselgrove, et al., 'Stanwick, North Yorkshire, Part 1: Recent research and previous archaeological investigations', *Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 143 (1990) p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> Humphrey Welfare et al., 'Stanwick, North Yorkshire, Part 2: A summary description of the earthworks', *Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 147 (1990), p. 24.

<sup>31</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola*, p. 54.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p. 39.

to combine with other tribes. Ultimately, this means that they too fought the Romans as individual tribal units and thus were collectively conquered – even though Roman occupation is a common threat to all tribes.

The tribes had limited interactions, which ultimately resulted in a lack of coherency, therefore making it easier for Rome to invade and pacify the island by conquering each tribe individually. This is evidenced by the case of the *Brigantes* and the *Parisi* as the Romans would not have been able to invade *Brigantia* without occupying East Yorkshire first.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the absence of a unified front meant that the tribes only responded when the threat is inevitable or imminent. The diverse nature of the tribes meant that they did not appear to share any kind of similarities that would imply they would be able to work coherently to form an effective resistance strategy to the Roman occupation. The tribal schisms would have been present long before the Romans came along – their presence merely exacerbated the situation. The tribes appear to have preferred to have alliances with the Romans than uniting the tribes – they had fundamental differences that stopped them joining together.

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<sup>33</sup> Halkon, *Parisi*, p. 206.

## Chapter Two

### Case Study: The Battle of Mon Graupius (83/84 AD)

Agricola's campaign of northern expansion culminated at the battle of Mons Graupius in AD 83 or 84 – the lack of description in Tacitus' writing means we are unable to be certain on the date. This is not the only anomaly in the literature: Tacitus fails to give an exact location of the battle in his account. However, it is widely accepted by historians the battle occurred in eastern Scotland, north of the river Tay.<sup>34</sup> This battle is chosen specifically as a case study due to the detailed account of events by Tacitus. There is no surviving evidence from any other battles in Northern Britain that give a vivid insight into the tactics and weapons used by both the Romans and the Britons. Additionally, there is a lack of secondary literature addressing the actions of the *Caledonii* and how their actions impacted the outcome of the battle. The aim of this chapter is to address whether the defeat of the *Caledonii* was inevitable due to the indestructible fighting force of the Roman army or if it was something they had done wrong. In order to answer this, the effectiveness of the weapons will be analysed alongside the tactics used by both sides. The analysis of Agricola's leadership will illuminate his importance in the battle's victory. Archaeological evidence will be used to see if the weapons and tactics used in this battle can be applied to other tribes in Northern Britain.

One of the distinguishing factors of the Britons was that they upheld the Celtic tradition of chariot warfare. Tacitus does not specify the chariots use, only stating 'the charioteers filled the middle of the plain, making a din as they rode back and forth.'<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> D. J. Woolliscroft, 'More thoughts on why the Romans failed to conquer Scotland', *Scottish Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 22 (2000), p. 111.

<sup>35</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola*, p. 25.



Tacitus previously mentioned the chariots were typically reserved for the use of the nobility, suggesting the leaders on the chariots acted as a mustering point for the infantry to gather behind and follow into battle.<sup>36</sup> Tacitus' account tells of the abandonment of the charioteers, 'runaway chariots or terrified, riderless horses with nothing but fear to direct them careered into the ranks.'<sup>37</sup> Giving the implication the nobility saw the imminent failure of the *Caledonii* and decided to flee before getting killed, the abandonment of the leaders resulted in disorganised chaos. Use of the chariots as a mustering point displays the archaic nature of their military tactics, highlighting the lack of advancements in tribal weaponry. The implication is the *Caledonii* use the same fighting style they would have used to fight other tribes. With the Romans being a much more developed fighting force, their traditional tactics and weapons would not be good enough.

Furthermore, chariot tactics suggests it may not have been utilised to its most effective means. There is no account of what the chariots were doing during the battle, it can be implied they utilised similar tactics to ones that were encountered by Caesar when he first landed in Britain:

First they drive around in all directions, casting missiles and generally throwing army ranks into confusion through the panic caused by the horses and the noise of the wheels. Then, when they have wormed their way between the cavalry squadrons, they jump down from the chariots and fight on foot. ... They provide the flexible mobility of cavalry and the stability of infantry in battle.<sup>38</sup>

The Britons used the chariot as a means of movement across the battlefield, showing their main intention is to use the chariot to break up the squadrons that would subsequently

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>38</sup> Caesar, *The Gallic Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 85.

allow them to start their attack, while their opponents were busy trying to regroup. This was effective in the ambush of Caesars' men some 120 years before the battle of Mons Graupius, as it was one of the first encounters the Romans had with the natives – they did not know what to expect. Whereas in Agricola's case, he would have been aware the *Caledonii* would use their chariots to try and break up his ranks, meaning he would have known how to counteract it. This further suggests that tribal losses were a result of the lack of advancement in their weaponry – they maintained the same techniques and weaponry used in the inter-tribal conflicts. These tactics would have worked when the Romans were just starting their conquest because they were not aware of the Britons capabilities, but as the conquest expanded northwards, the Romans gathered an understanding of their fighting style. This made them easier to beat – to the point at which Agricola was able to anticipate the *Caledonii's* next move. The role of Agricola will be discussed in more detail later.

Bringing the focus back to weaponry, Tacitus recalled the battle started with long range fighting,

The Britons not only stood firm but displayed skill in parrying the javelins of our men with their massive swords or catching them with their short shields.<sup>39</sup>

Caledonian weaponry was most effective at blocking the artillery fired by the Romans, but when it came to close contact fighting the weapons fell short. This explains why tribes are frequently recorded as using guerrilla warfare: they would strike the Romans when they were weak and so would not experience the full force of the Roman army they would receive in a pitched battle. Tacitus describes the swords as blunt and 'un-suited for a cut-

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<sup>39</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola*, p. 26.

and-thrust struggle.<sup>40</sup> The swords would not have been able to penetrate the Romans armour, further highlighting inevitable tribal failure. With Tacitus naming the leader of the *Caledonii* tribe Calgacus, meaning ‘swordsmen’, draws attention to the style of weapon used, as there is no way Tacitus would have known their leader’s name.<sup>41</sup> It is highly likely Tacitus named him as such because the ‘massive’ sword was a distinctive feature of the native Britons as chalk figurines found in *Parisi* territory show the warriors with long, wide swords.<sup>42</sup> With the exception of spears, the sword is the only other weapon at the disposal of the *Caledonii*, further highlighting the lack of advancements in tribal weaponry in Britain. Although Tacitus does not give any indication as to the weapons used by the Roman auxiliary, it can be inferred they were equipped with more suitable weapons.<sup>43</sup> The general illustration given by Tacitus indicates the *Caledonii* were poorly equipped to fight the Romans, as accounts from Vindolanda note ‘the Britons are unprotected by armour.’<sup>44</sup> Instead, each man wore the decorations he had won and commonly covered in paint, making them even more vulnerable to the Roman weapons.

The poor quality of *Caledonian* weapons seriously hindered efforts to expel Romans from their territory. However, this is not sufficient enough in answering why of the 30,000 tribesmen fighting, 10,000 were killed – whereas only 366 of Agricola’s auxiliaries fell.<sup>45</sup> Tacitus’ relationship to Agricola means these statistics are likely to be an exaggeration to illuminate Agricola’s military prowess. The lack of effective weapons is an important factor

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Anthony Kamm, *The Last Frontier* (New York: Neil Wilson Publishing, 2011), p. 65.

<sup>42</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Charles, ‘Mons Graupius Revisited: Tacitus, Agricola and Auxiliary Infantry’, *Athenaeum*, Vol. 1 (2004), p. 136.

<sup>44</sup> Vindolanda Tablet 164 [<http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/4DLink2/4DACTION/WebRequestQuery>] Accessed: 25/03/2017.

<sup>45</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola*, p. 27.

in the *Caledonii* failure, the cataclysmic defeat lies in the tactics used by the Romans and the *Caledonii*.

The *Caledonii* in this situation are viewed as being a confederacy: 'Such a force seems likely to have been raised to save Caledonia and spare it being marched over the previous year.'<sup>46</sup> It could be argued that the amount of warriors that showed up to fight the Romans could be an indication of the fear of the incoming Roman force; they were threatened to the point of calling in help from other tribes, implying they were aware of their inferiority to the Roman army.

The tactics deployed by the *Caledonii* at the battle of Mons Graupius were traditional Celtic tactics, designed to intimidate the enemy,

Posted on the heights, both to make a show and to intimidate their front ranks were on the flat ground, the remainder were packed together on the slopes of the hill.<sup>47</sup>

Although the vast amount of warriors would be daunting to the Roman auxiliaries, it is doubtful the Caledonian tactic would have had the desired effect. As the army had already experienced fighting the Britons. The Romans had encountered the *Caledonii* before, and were beaten. In 83AD they ambushed the XI Legions camp in Fife, Agricola reached the camp with reinforcements before the *Caledonii* were about to overrun the Romans.<sup>48</sup> Highlighting their preferred tactics due to the inferiority of their weapons: 'The tribes respected the armoured legions and did not rush headlong into a pitched battle but sought to probe the Roman columns for weaknesses, to attack supply lines and disrupt

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<sup>46</sup> J. Hind, 'Summer and Winters in Tacitus' Account of Agricola's Campaigns in Britain', *Northern History*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1985), p. 12.

<sup>47</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola*, p. 25.

<sup>48</sup> Paul Cowan, *Scottish Military Disasters* (New York: Neil Wilson Publishing, 2011), p. 10.

communications.<sup>49</sup> The *Caledonii* did not want to be drawn into a pitched battle against the Romans due to their better weapons. Additionally, Tacitus' account does not articulate a clear Caledonian strategy, which would indicate that they were not used to pitched battles – like the one at Mons Graupius. Their inexperience was highlighted by their reaction to setbacks,

Whole crowds of armed men turned tail before inferior numbers, but some unarmed individuals deliberately charged and exposed themselves to certain death.<sup>50</sup>

There was no clear strategy, so when warriors saw the skill of the Roman auxiliaries, the battle erupted into chaos – showing the *Caledonii* did not anticipate the high skill of the Roman army. Not only was this battle a victory for the Romans, but battle also saw no Roman blood being spilt.

The strategy implemented by Agricola was not the typical strategy implemented by Roman governors as he put his legion as the reserve and used his auxiliaries as the primary fighting force. This went against the typical Roman formation for a pitched battle – as reflected by Tacitus' account of Suetonius' conflict with Boudicca: 'Suetonius drew up his regular troops in close order, with the light-armed auxiliaries at their flanks, and the cavalry massed on the wings.'<sup>51</sup> The purpose of the auxilia was to assist the Legions – the regular troops – in a typical Roman formation.<sup>52</sup> This is a key debate amongst historians as Tacitus does not specify why Agricola made such a decision, only stating that 'victory in a battle where no Roman blood was shed would be a tremendous honour.'<sup>53</sup> The difference

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<sup>49</sup> John Sadler, *Scottish Battles* (New York: Birlinn, 2012), p. 25.

<sup>50</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola*, p. 25.

<sup>51</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, p. 330.

<sup>52</sup> Duncan Campbell, *Mons Graupius AD 83: Rome's battle at the edge of the world* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010), p. 16.

<sup>53</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola*, p. 25.

between the legion and the auxiliary was that the legion was composed of Roman citizens, and were typically considered as the army's elite.<sup>54</sup> The auxiliaries were seen to be expandable soldiers as they were not Roman citizens – usually being picked up during the Romans campaigns across Europe.

Catherine Gilliver argues that the use of the auxiliary was a practical choice as they would have been better suited to the topographical circumstances of the battlefield.<sup>55</sup> The marshy ground made movement across the terrain difficult for the heavily armoured legions. Furthermore, Gilliver suggests that Tacitus' mention of the preservation of Roman blood was a literary tactic which allowed a Roman reader to contrast this battle where no Roman citizen had died to other battles on the continent under the reign of Domitian – thus emphasising Agricola's military prowess.<sup>56</sup> Tacitus' mention of the preservation of Roman blood further highlights the issues surrounding working with such a primary source, as Tacitus had written this book for the purpose of entertaining or educating the Roman reader. His overly critical mentions of Domitian suggest a political agenda; being the son-in-law of Agricola, it is likely he resented the Emperor because he had troops withdrawn from Northern Britain after it had been consolidated and thus dismantled most of Agricola's achievements.

In contrast to Gilliver's argument on the auxiliaries, Michael Charles argues the Legions were not used because Agricola did not want any more of the Legion dying – their Roman citizenship was irrelevant: 'Agricola disposed of a weakened legionary force; in particular, he holds that the ninth legion was under strength. It might appear, that Agricola

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<sup>54</sup> Sadler, *Scottish Battles*, p. 31.

<sup>55</sup> Catherine M. Gilliver, 'Mons Graupius and the Role of the Auxiliaries in Battle', *Greece & Rome*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (1996), p. 57.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* p. 63.

had no wish to compromise his legionary forces further.<sup>57</sup> It was a move by Agricola to maintain the strength of his Legion, as Tacitus references that the *Caledonii* did ambush the Ninth Legion 'as being by far the weakest in numbers'.<sup>58</sup> Further losses to the Legion could have impacted on further expansion efforts with the Legions being the more elite troops. Charles stated the auxiliaries would be better suited to Agricola's more open battle formation. But repudiate Gilliver's topographical argument because the ascent up the hill would be easier for the Legions in their 'lighter segmented cuirasses'.<sup>59</sup> Agricola's choice to use his auxiliaries instead of the Legion gives a strong indication to the state of the Roman army when it reached its peak during the conquest of Britain. Choosing to have his Legions as a reserve in order to maintain its strength highlights that the expansion and conquests during Agricola's campaigns were not as easy as one would initially imagine. Due to a lack of evidence, we do not know how other battles during his campaigns impacted the army but, with Agricola worried of his dwindling numbers in the Legion, one can only assume that the tribes were reluctant to Roman rule and heavily resisted in areas not mentioned in Tacitus' writings. In choosing to go against the general battle formation and succeeding with little loss of life, showed Agricola to be one of the greatest military leaders during the Roman conquest of Britain. This raises the question as to whether the success of this battle came down to the skill of the army or the skill of Agricola.

Agricola reached conquered lands that would later be retreated from with later governors. But the tactics Agricola implemented was far from the typical battle strategy utilised by the Roman army. First, Agricola made use of the navy which had never been

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<sup>57</sup> Charles, 'Tacitus, Agricola and Auxiliary Infantry', p. 134.

<sup>58</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola*, p. 19.

<sup>59</sup> Charles, 'Tacitus, Agricola and Auxiliary Infantry', p. 131.

done in the Romans expansion campaign.<sup>60</sup> This had positive effects for the Romans as it was putting pressure on the *Caledonii* and other northern tribes from Roman invasion over land and sea, this was all to push the *Caledonii* into engaging with the Romans in a pitched battle – something Agricola knew his army would have an advantage in. This is highlighted through the reactions by the *Caledonii* to the navy:

The peoples who inhabit Caledonia turned to armed struggle. Their preparations were on a large scale, exaggerated, as the unknown usually is by rumour. Further, by attacking some forts, they had added to the alarm, as if they were throwing out a challenge.<sup>61</sup>

The reaction of the tribe show just how much Agricola's actions had exacerbated the tensions, thus quickly bringing about war. It shows that although the battle with the *Caledonii* would have been inevitable, the actions of Agricola had a snowball effect – making everything happen quicker. Arguably, if Agricola was not the leader of the campaign to expand northwards, the evidence would imply that the Romans would not have reached as far north as they did. Furthermore, Agricola's actions on the battlefield of Mons Graupius, illustrates his divergence from the norm of Roman generals in solely using his auxiliaries, and his ability to counteract movements by the tribes. This is shown through Agricola's intuition that the *Caledonii* would ambush the Ninth Legion: 'the Britons, however, reckoned that they had not been defeated by superior courage but by the opportune actions and skills of the general'.<sup>62</sup> This further illustrates that if it was not for Agricola, the battle would not have taken place at Mons Graupius, but somewhere further south. It is

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<sup>60</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola*, p. 19.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 20.



through Agricola's military expertise that he managed to scare and pressurise the *Caledonii* into a pitched battle which he knew the army would have the advantage.

Use of chariots during conflicts was specific to British tribes, highlighted by the Britons success in breaking up Caesar's ranks, creating a disorganised frenzy.<sup>63</sup> This was a major difference between the British tribes and the tribes on the Continent. Like the *Caledonii*, the strength of the Germanic tribes lay with the infantry, with their weapons also restricted to spears and swords.<sup>64</sup> The universal battle strategy seemingly adopted by all European tribes subsequently explains why it was so easy for Agricola to defeat the *Caledonii* at Mons Graupius. When drawn out to a pitched battle, Agricola was able to anticipate their next move, which would in turn, reduce the amount of deaths in the Roman army.

The *Caledonii* were at a disadvantage due to their choice of weapons – the big sword did not work in conjunction with their shields making close quarter fighting harder for them. They were aware of this limitation, which is why they preferred hit and run tactics and ambushes – avoiding pitched battles. Additionally, the turnout of the battle, with some 30,000 warriors, would indicate that they were seeking to compensate for their disadvantage in weaponry by massively outnumbering the Romans. The result was a decisive Roman victory at Mons Graupius. One key reason was that Agricola used his military expertise and utilised the auxiliaries instead of the legion – going against the norm of Roman fighting strategy. Without Agricola, Romans may not have been able to get so deeply into Northern Britain. Eventually, however, the Romans started to withdraw from

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<sup>63</sup> Caesar, *The Gallic Wars*, p. 85.

<sup>64</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola*, p. 40.

the area, as they were unable to hold it. The Roman withdrawal from the region will be looked at in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Roman Fortresses in Northern England and Scotland**

The consolidation of Northern England and Scotland mostly under Agricola saw the introduction of fortresses across the region in order to secure Roman occupation, suppress tribal culture and instigate Romanisation. Historians have looked at the Roman fortresses in terms of their social aspects. Robin Birley, for example, looks at the Roman fortresses and the impacts of the Vindolanda fort on civilian settlement in the area.<sup>65</sup> This chapter uses the analysis of the fortresses to give an indication of the attitudes of the tribes in the areas surrounding the fort towards the Romans at the time. The evidence for this chapter will be drawn primarily from archaeological reports, which is somewhat problematic as issues arise when working with archaeological sources. Historians have struggled with the dating of some materials in several of the forts, which subsequently makes some of the analysis circumstantial, as the exact date cannot be ascertained. Additionally, basing the analysis on excavation reports – due to the lack of literary evidence – means that we are unable to know the circumstances surrounding the activities implied by the historians when carrying out the excavations. The focus of this chapter is on what the fortresses tell us about tribal resistance in different areas, drawing on a comparison between the forts in Scotland and the forts in Northern England to see if the archaeological reports show any distinguishing factors that would have prompted Hadrian to build his wall separating the two areas.

Drawing on two common themes between the forts in Scotland and England, defences illuminate signs of possible attacks and implies a hostile native population. Evidence of civilian settlements give an indication of tribal attitudes as it suggests the

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<sup>65</sup> Robin Birley, *Vindolanda: A Roman frontier post on Hadrian's Wall* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), p. 70.

successful execution of Romanisation. Due to a lack of evidence with the Scottish forts, the size of the settlements and the materials used will be looked at in Northern England that will give further indications as to the stability and attitudes in the region. Elginhaugh, located south-east of Edinburgh and Newstead, will be the primary focus for the Scottish forts, but others will be drawn on to support the analysis. Corbridge in Northern England is the primary focus of the analysis of forts in the region due to its extensive archaeological report. These conclusions will be compared against other forts in Northern England to see if the conclusions drawn can be applied on a regional scale. Furthermore, contrasting Scottish and Northern English forts illustrates how tribal resistance has evolved in both regions. Most evidence comes from forts along the frontier that became Hadrian's Wall with the exception of Heronbridge in Cheshire. This chapter aims to answer why Hadrian's Wall was constructed and how tribal resistance manifested itself in the Scottish tribes after the defeat of the *Caledonii* at the Battle of Mons Graupius.

The expectation is that Scottish forts would be heavily defended – assuming the tribal population was hostile due to the fact that Hadrian's Wall excluded them from the Roman Empire. Elginhaugh's defence system was more than a usual Roman encampment.<sup>66</sup> This interpretation is further supported by the discovery of a light catapult within the fort, suggesting hostility towards the Romans.<sup>67</sup> There is no evidence to suggest there had been an attack on the encampment, the presence of the weapon implies a negative relationship between the Romans and the Britons. Likewise, the addition of three concentric ditches surrounding the fort is 'likely to relate to a reassessment of the security provision.'<sup>68</sup> Increased defences insinuates a hostile region. There appear to have been few defence

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<sup>66</sup> William S. Hanson, *Elginhaugh: A Flavian Fort and its Annexe, Volume 1* (London: The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 2007), p. 134.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> William S. Hanson, *A Roman Frontier Fort in Scotland: Elginhaugh* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2007), p. 34.

mechanisms in place across many of the Scottish forts, highlighted at Barochan Hill, where evidence of a gully filled with cobbles but no stake-holes.<sup>69</sup> Lack of defences implies the passivity of the area; the defences at Newsteads fell out of use due to the settlements expanding beyond the defensive line, which suggests that the area was peaceful enough to move beyond the encompassing defences.<sup>70</sup> As a result, the situation around Elginhaugh was an exception to the general pattern of Scottish encampments. This is not to say the Scottish tribes accepted the Romans and partook in the Romanisation process, yet it suggests they acknowledged they were not able to take on the Romans from the past experience of Agricola tearing through the region and the cataclysmic defeat at the Battle of Mons Graupius. The evidence in Northern England highlights different attitudes towards Romanisation.

The Corbridge excavation shows evidence of fire damage associated with the primary occupation of the fort; also ‘the hoard of coins which is thought to have a direct bearing on the date of the primary fort was found associated with a burnt deposit, but it should be remembered that it was found at a depth of only 0.51m.’<sup>71</sup> Arson suggests an enemy attack on the encampment highlighting negative attitudes towards the Romans. However, evidence also correlates to the fortress being remodelled – hence the destruction deposits.<sup>72</sup> Archaeologists have come to the conclusion Corbridge was occupied in ‘phases’, and there was an opportunity for the fortress to have evolved to accommodate soldiers during each phase of occupation at the fort – this kind of activity has been discovered at

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<sup>69</sup> Lawrence Keppie and Frank Newall, ‘Excavations at the Roman fort of Barochan Hill, Renfrewshire, 1972 and 1984-1986’, *Glasgow Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 20 (1996), p. 45.

<sup>70</sup> Simon Clarke and Alicia Wise, ‘Evidence for extramural settlement north of the Roman fort at Newstead (Trimontium), Roxburghshire’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, Vol. 129 (1999), p. 385.

<sup>71</sup> M. Bishop and J. Dore, *Corbridge: Excavations of the Roman fort and town, 1947-1980* (English Heritage, 1988), p. 126.

<sup>72</sup> Duncan Campbell, *Roman Auxiliary Forts 27 BC – 378 AD* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2009), p. 13.

Vindolanda, also suggesting a widespread movement.<sup>73</sup> The issues of working with archaeological reports is that with no literary evidence to support it, the use and reason for its presence cannot be certain. The evidence suggests that tribal resistance in Scotland subsided after the Battle of Mons Graupius, as there is no evidence to support any tribal attacks on the forts. However, the forts were also used as a base to monitor native movements in the area and convoys moving from different locations as these would be more vulnerable to tribal attacks, thus making them more susceptible to traditional hit-and-run tactics. This could explain why the fortresses show no signs of experiencing an enemy attack. It does not, however, explain why native settlements have developed around the fortresses if they were still attacking the Romans – further implying a transition in tribal resistance tactics. The defensive earthworks show little difference between the Scottish and English forts, giving clear indications that the resisting tribes no longer manifested their resistance to Rome in aggressive attacks.

As Corbridge shows signs of possible re-modelling, the size of Corbridge would be constantly changing: ‘there may have been considerable changes in the area covered by the sequence of forts to accommodate units of different sizes, and therefore defences of individual phases might occupy different sites.’<sup>74</sup> Evidence suggests the size of the forts along the Stanegate line – which later evolved into the Roman frontier in Britain – were larger than the fortresses located south of Hadrian’s Wall; this is thought to have been used as a garrison for the troops coming out of the Scottish territory.<sup>75</sup> However, Corbridge shows signs of down-sizing to accommodate a smaller garrison. Trenches discovered at Corbridge have been associated with ‘part of the phase 1a fort, this would imply that these

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<sup>73</sup> Bishop and Dore, *Corbridge*, p. 97.

<sup>74</sup> Bishop and Dore, *Corbridge*, p. 8.

<sup>75</sup> Shotter, *Roman Britain*, p. 36.

southern defences are associated with phase 1b and that there has been a reduction in the size of the phase 1a site.<sup>76</sup> The reduction suggests that the forts along the Stanegate line were no longer hosting troops on retreat from Scotland – and so large encampments were no longer needed.

Elginhaugh does not show evidence of civilian settlements, reaffirming the argument of it being hostile due to the heavily defended encampment. An alternative interpretation to the lack of settlement in this area could focus on the limited time the fortress was occupied – this further explains why the buildings never transitioned into stone fortifications as found in Northern England. Around the start of the Second Century, garrisons had withdrawn to Newstead.<sup>77</sup> The defeat of the *Caledonii* at the Battle of Mons Graupius around 83AD saw Agricola consolidating the conquered territories of Scotland, but if the Romans had withdrawn back to Newstead by the early Second Century the fortresses were not occupied for very long. This would highlight the low strategic importance of the Roman occupation of Scotland during this period, as ‘the decision to abandon the conquered areas north of the Forth-Clyde isthmus, probably in order to transfer troops to the Danube, was taken shortly afterwards, probably around 86-87.’<sup>78</sup> Moving troops out of the area to the Danube suggests that the threats from the Scottish tribes were not considered as prominent as those made by the Dacians. It suggests that the Scottish tribes changed their resistance tactics to more passive methods.

Scottish encampments that show the presence of civilian settlement show the Romanisation of the area being unsuccessful. In Newstead, the presence of an amphitheatre would initially suggest a certain degree of Romanisation of the population, but the purpose

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<sup>76</sup> Bishop and Dore, *Corbridge*, p. 97.

<sup>77</sup> Campbell, *Roman Auxiliary Forts*, p. 17.

<sup>78</sup> Paul Masser et al., ‘Recent Work at Drumquhassle Roman Fort, Stirlingshire’, *Scottish Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2002), p. 165.

of the amphitheatre is thought to be primarily for military use – not entertainment as is commonly seen.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, ‘the low proportion of samian ware in the pottery assemblage (10.4% from a total of 613 sherds) suggests a community of modest means’.<sup>80</sup> The low presence of Roman wares suggests limited trade between Romans and the tribal population, suggesting a transition towards passive resistance by rejecting Roman culture and limiting trade with the army: ‘Occasional trade with at least some natives took place, as demonstrated by the recovery of Roman artefacts from brochs and rectilinear farmstead enclosures in the Newstead area.’<sup>81</sup> In other words, there was interaction between the Romans and tribes, but on a much smaller scale as compared to the Northern England counterparts.

The presence of the Romans in Northern England generated a focus to stronger economies in the areas where they were based – due to trade between the Romans and natives, but for trade to occur between the two peoples it required the natives to show acceptance of Romanisation. Settlements were not discovered in areas with hostile populations, but ‘it seems likely that the *vici* were deliberately created rather than just growing over a period of time.’<sup>82</sup> The opportunity of earning money through interactions with the Roman army is likely to have been a pull factor in encouraging passive populations to Romanise. The Corbridge fortress shows evidence of a settlement evolving around the encampment, highlighted by the defences being later extended to encompass the town.<sup>83</sup> Highlighting the importance of the *vici* in maintaining the process of Romanisation and thus the subjugation of the native population. Development of the *vici* is reflected at

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<sup>79</sup> Clarke and Wise, ‘Newstead’, p. 387.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p. 387.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> James Crow, *Housesteads: A Fort and Garrison on Hadrian’s Wall* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2004), p. 73.

<sup>83</sup> Bishop and Dore, Corbridge, p. 87.



Heronbridge, where evidence highlights the 'civilian nature of the community.'<sup>84</sup> It shows the repression of the tribes through Romanisation – subsequently showing that they no longer resisted the Romans. The Roman army was important in maintaining Roman culture in the area. Civilians became closely associated with the fortresses and if this was the case the natives were not fighting the Romans in these areas. Fortresses that later developed into urban centres were 'substantially dependent upon the frontier garrisons for their raison d'être. Corbridge developed into a walled town, but remained essentially under military authority.'<sup>85</sup> It illustrates the importance of the Roman army in maintaining the subjugation of the Natives in Northern England; this is why when the Romans left the area, Roman culture was not maintained due to the severed connection to the Roman Empire.

Furthermore, several of the fortresses appear to be located at previously occupied native settlements, 'indications of other smaller enclosures occur on the west side of this enclosure, all of which have a non-military, even "native" appearance'.<sup>86</sup> The native characteristics imply that the fortress was built on a tribal hub. This could be an explanation as to why they developed into thriving settlements because the native Britons wanted to stay close to their old heritage. Such an interpretation would suggest that they never fully accepted Romanisation. Further evidence can be found in other parts of Northern England: the presence of vici in the surrounding areas of Roman forts implies that the local population was cultivating produce specifically for trading within the military markets.<sup>87</sup> Further highlighting the fact that the presence of the Roman army was an incredibly

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<sup>84</sup> D. J. P. Mason, 'The Roman Site at Heronbridge, near Chester, Cheshire: Aspects of Civilian Settlement in the Vicinity of Legionary Fortresses in Britain and Beyond', *Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 145, No. 1 (1988), p. 139.

<sup>85</sup> Dennis Harding, *The Iron Age in Northern Britain: Celts and Romans, natives and invaders* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 172.

<sup>86</sup> Bishop and Dore, *Corbridge*, p. 11; Mason, 'Heronbridge', p. 145.

<sup>87</sup> N. J. Higham, 'Continuity Studies in the First Millennium A.D. in North Cumbria', *Northern History*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1978), pp. 1-18.

important source of income for the Romanised natives. Building the fortress on previous tribal settlements was a strategic ploy by the Romans in order to draw the natives into Romanisation, as these areas would be heavily populated by natives.

Specifically, in Northern England, the downsizing of fortresses meant that smaller groups of soldiers were needed to garrison a singular fort. It implied the pacification of the area – which would subsequently result in troops being re-located to more hostile areas. This is highlighted by the Vindolanda tablets. Analysis of the strength-report tablet at Vindolanda suggests a degree of pacification as they had expendable soldiers to send elsewhere.

18 May, net number of the First Cohort of Tungrians, of which the commander is Iulius Verecundus the prefect, 752, ... total absentees 456.<sup>88</sup>

Over half of the Cohort being absent from Vindolanda indicates that soldiers could be seconded for duty elsewhere. In comparison with the Scottish forts in which Elginhaugh, for example, was heavily defended would reflect the violent nature. Additionally, the ability to send troops elsewhere shows the successful results of Romanisation in the area.

The materials used during the initial construction of Hadrian's Wall can also indicate tribal attitudes: 'The initial construction of the western end of Hadrian's Wall in turf (rather than stone) might be answered by suggesting that local commanders began the Wall's construction where there was evidence of disturbance.'<sup>89</sup> This interpretation would suggest that the hostile area along the frontier was located on the eastern side of the wall and that the Cumbrian region was somewhat more passive in comparison. The allocating of stone

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<sup>88</sup> Vindolanda Tablet 154 [<http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/4DLink2/4DACTION/WebRequestQuery>] Accessed: 25/03/2017.

<sup>89</sup> Shotter, *Roman Britain*, p. 38.

materials to the more unstable areas would thus imply that having the fortresses built in stone in these areas would have a more commanding presence over the area, and subdue any hostilities towards the Romans and force progress through Romanisation. Furthermore, speculation as to the presence of three fortresses within Cumbria could signify a hostile population or could represent an area of strategic importance with access to food requirements.<sup>90</sup> However, the idea of Cumbria being unstable with a lot of local hostility towards the Romans is not supported by the evidence of the turfed area of Hadrian's Wall – the stone wall was built in the areas that were the most unstable first, and since this part of the country consisted of turf walls, it suggests a more receptive attitude to Romanisation.

The Eastern frontier is considered to be a much more fragile area than the British Isles; this is mostly down to the militant nature of the Dacian tribes, which saw them physically attacking the fortresses along the Danube – which is not evident in the British forts.

Amongst the *Dacians* there was trouble... But when they saw Italy in the flames of war, and found the whole world divided into hostile camps, they fell upon the winter quarters of the cohorts and cavalry and began to occupy both banks of the Danube.<sup>91</sup>

The aggressive attacks by the tribes around the Danube region highlight why it was more important for the Romans to transfer the soldiers from Scotland. It suggests that the threat posed by the *Dacians* was stronger than the threat from Scottish tribes. This is a result of the contrasting nature of how both tribes resisted the Romans. It could also be considered that failure to subjugate the northern tribes of England was less of a priority due to the

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<sup>90</sup> Higham, 'North Cumbria', p. 2.

<sup>91</sup> Tacitus, *The Histories*, p.144.

nature of Britannia being an island: the thought of revolt could not spread as easily as in continental Europe.

The implications of the fortresses show that Hadrian's Wall was built to stop tribal resistance that manifested itself in rejection of Romanisation. As James Crow has noted, 'It is possible to understand Hadrian's Wall as a response to a continually hostile population throughout the north of Britain which could neither be subdued in a set battle nor cajoled into the luxuries of Roman life'.<sup>92</sup> The passive resistance that appears to have been adopted by the Scottish tribes offers an explanation as to why Hadrian's Wall was built. The main intent of the wall was to protect the Romanised tribes from the influences of the resisting Scottish tribes trying to encourage a return to their old Celtic traditions – hence why movement in and out of Northern England from Scotland was monitored. Not only does this highlight the somewhat unstable hold the Romans had on Northern England, which is reflected in the tribal characteristics of some of the civilian settlements surrounding the fortresses. It further shows the transition in resistance tactics after the defeat of the *Caledonii* at Mons Graupius.

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<sup>92</sup> Crow, *Housesteads*, p. 13.

## Conclusion

This dissertation aimed to address the gap in the existing literature relating to tribal resistance in Northern England and Scotland up to the construction of Hadrian's Wall. Having tracked the evolution of tribal resistance, this dissertation has confirmed Hadrian's Wall was built as a means of protecting the somewhat Romanised tribes in Northern England from the influences of the resisting tribes in Scotland. Regional variations has resulted in tribal resistance manifesting in different ways throughout this period.

Chapter One established the tribes in Northern England as being fundamentally different – they were unable to unite against the Romans due to hostile relationships and a lack of interaction. Unity is what was required to prevent the Roman expansion into Northern Britain. However, Cartimandua's attitude towards handing Caratacus over to the Romans shows complete disregard for the welfare of other tribes. Through her actions Cartimandua is accountable for creating irreparable schisms within her own tribe – her behaviour resulted in a Civil War that subsequently tore the biggest tribe in Britain apart. With the biggest threat to the Romans now broken due to their own political instabilities, the Romans ploughed through Northern England, conquering and consolidating with very little resistance. A different story can be said for Scotland.

The Battle of Mons Graupius highlighted the tribes' inability to beat the Romans when drawn out to a pitched battle. The Romans were better equipped and armoured, and so had some degree of protection. However, the success of the battle comes down to the fact that Agricola was aware of the Caledonian strategy, and thus able to anticipate their next move. Agricola would have been aware of this as Tacitus recounts a very similar battle strategy deployed by the Germanic tribes on the continent. This resulted in the cataclysmic

defeat of the Caledonian tribe. The battle was a turning point in tribal resistance in Britain as there is very little evidence to suggest that tribesmen were militant towards the Romans consolidating the area. This is reflected in the analysis of fortress in chapter three.

Limited evidence of enemy attacks on Roman fortresses throughout Scotland shows that resistance had begun to manifest itself in the form of passive resistance – through the rejection of Romanisation. It might help to explain the construction of Hadrian's Wall, as the rejection of Romanisation threatened the stability of Northern England that had appeared to be embracing the Romanisation process.

Overall, it is fair to conclude that tribal resistance failed in Northern England due to factions in tribes – resulting in their instability. By contrast, resistance in Scotland flourished after the Battle of Mons Graupius. This may be a result of the low strategic importance of Scotland in the wider view of the Roman Empire – more serious threats elsewhere drew them away from this region.

## **Appendix**

1. Chalk Figurine, Hull Museums Collection. At:  
[http://www.hullcc.gov.uk/museumcollections/collections/search-results/display.php?irn=23911&keywordsorig=figurine&titleorig=&personorig=&placeorig=&dateorig=&materialorig=&accessionnumberorig=&collectionorig=&museumorig=&keywords=chalk&newsearch=within&title=&person=&place=&date=&material=&accessionnumber=&collectionall=all&museumall=all&location=any&SearchSubmit\\_x=0&SearchSubmit\\_y=0&ImagesOnly=yes&Sender=List&Sender=List&Page=2](http://www.hullcc.gov.uk/museumcollections/collections/search-results/display.php?irn=23911&keywordsorig=figurine&titleorig=&personorig=&placeorig=&dateorig=&materialorig=&accessionnumberorig=&collectionorig=&museumorig=&keywords=chalk&newsearch=within&title=&person=&place=&date=&material=&accessionnumber=&collectionall=all&museumall=all&location=any&SearchSubmit_x=0&SearchSubmit_y=0&ImagesOnly=yes&Sender=List&Sender=List&Page=2)  
[Accessed: 28/01/2017]



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