

Workshop II: York 2008
Report on RIB 642 and 703
(Christopher Lillington-Martin)

The practical research for this commentary on RIB 642 and 703 (Collingwood & Wright 1995: 215) is based on autopsy and was undertaken during the British Epigraphy Society's second Practical Epigraphy Workshop, held at Yorkshire Museum, York, 24-6th June 2008. This provided the rare opportunity to work with epigraphic material amongst expert instructors. The support of Roger Tomlin and Charles Crowther (Oxford), Graham Oliver (Liverpool) as well as Richard Grasby and the workshop organisers, Dr. Peter Haarer and Dr. Charlotte Tupman, and the Curator of Yorkshire Museum, Andrew Morrison, and his staff is hereby acknowledged as is that of The British Epigraphy Society and The Classical Association.

RIB 642

Collingwood and Wright listed *Ephemeris Epigraphica* vii 936 and Watkin *Archaeological Journal* xxxvi (1879) 165 and xxxviii (1881) 297 in their bibliography. These were located in the Bodleian and Wadham College libraries during the Classics Triennial conference, Oxford 2008. As an introduction to the RIB 642 and 703 fragments, and given the relative brevity and difficulty of access of that bibliography, the former and latter, which refers to the second, are fully quoted here:

1. *Ephemeris Epigraphica (EE)* vii 936

"fragmenta tituli a. 1878 in front of the New Station Hotel rep., literis optimis; sunt in museo

S

SA SIV AVG NI T+F IV

T I

Contuli. Watkin arch. Journ. xxxviii 297"

2. Watkin *Archaeological Journal (AJ)* xxxviii (1881) 297

"In my list of Inscriptions found in 1878 AJ, vol. xxxvi (1879) 165, I referred to "a few unintelligible pieces of an inscription which has been shattered into fragments" found at York. I have narrowly inspected them and find that they are these:

AVG - I - IE - NI - IV ISIV

The letters are well cut and the inscription must have been a very fine one. I have thought it possible that the portion of the upper right hand corner may have been part of the words (SEPTIM)I SEV(ERI) but the genitive case is unusual and the letter after the S seems to be I. As to AVG, I have so put it, but the distinctive mark of the letter G is broken off, reading now as if it was AVC. Another portion of the outer moulding of the tablet remains, which is grasped or supported by the right hand of a human figure."

Unfortunately, no "hand of a human figure" remains visible within the collection of the fragments held at the Yorkshire Museum.

The following autopsy record is based on recommendations found in Keppie (2001:39):

Dimensions: (from RIB 642)

- (a) 8 x 7 in. (in two pieces);
- (b) 4 x 8 in.;
- (c) 6 x 4 in. (in two pieces);
- (d) 2.5 x 2 in.;
- (e) 4 x 3 in.;
- (f) 2.5 x 2 in. (missing since before 1959);
- (g) 3 x 1.5 in. and an additional piece labelled for convenience as
- (h) 7 x 5 in. (not recorded by Collingwood).

Findspot:

The stone was discovered in York in 1878 in the garden of the New Station (now Royal York Hotel).

Decoration

There are mouldings on RIB 642 (a), (b), (c) and (e) as well as an additional piece, not recorded in RIB 642, here labelled, for convenience, (h). The latter, whilst not recorded in RIB 642, is mentioned in *RCHME (RCHM Eburacum 1959: 132 No. 131)* as "(b) the top left-hand corner of the moulded die, uninscribed". *RCHME* is listed in RIB "addenda and corrigenda", Collingwood & Wright (1995: 770). *RCHME* describes the fragments as being from an "altar-tomb... freestanding, with panelled front and sides".

Text

- (a) (2 pieces: i and ii) BONO EVENTV]I·ET·F[ORTVNAE
- (b) I[... or L[...
- (c) (2 pieces: i and ii) ...]SIVs |
- (d) ...]O[... | ...]IO[...
- (e) |S[...
- (f) ...]NI[... (missing since before 1959)
- (g) ...]VM[...
- (h) uninscribed corner piece with mouldings on two sides.

Translation

"To Bonus Eventus and Fortune ..."

Letter dimensions

- (a) is in two pieces forming ...]I·ET·F[... as follows:
 - i. The letter "I" has a 4mm wide vertical stem; its "E" has a 5mm wide vertical stem and a 5mm wide horizontal bar.
 - ii. The "T" has a 4mm wide vertical stem, a 5mm wide horizontal bar and 11mm serif. The "F" has a 5mm wide bar.

Figure 1: fragment (a) i and ii as "I·ET·F".

(b) the probable "I" (see below) or possible "L" has a 4mm wide vertical stem and an 11mm serif.

Figure 2: fragment (b) as probable "I".

Figure 3: fragment (b) as probable "I" showing side moulding.

Figure 4: fragment (b) as possible "I" or "L".

(c) is in two pieces forming ...]SIVs | as follows:

- i. the "S" has a 3-6mm wide stem and 10mm serif; the "I" has a 3mm wide vertical stem and 8mm serif; and the "V" has a 4mm wide diagonal stem.
- ii. the "V" continues from 1. above. A three-quarter sized "s" (fitted in between the "V" and the moulding at the end of the line) has a 2-3mm wide stem and 9-10mm serifs.

Figure 5: fragment (c) i and ii as "SIVs".

(d) the final letter O is carved in a compressed shape resembling () with its left curve being 5mm wide and the right curve being 3mm wide.

Figure 6: fragment (d) as "O".

(e) the base of the "S" has an 11mm serif.

Figure 7: fragment (e) as base of "S".

Figure 8: fragment (e) showing side moulding.

(f) has been missing since before 1959.

(g) the "V" has a 3mm wide diagonal stem and the "M" has 5mm wide vertical stems and 4mm diagonal stems.

Figure 9: fragment (g) as “VM”.

(h) is a corner piece with mouldings on two sides but no lettering.

Figure 10: fragment (h) as “top left-hand corner of the moulded die, uninscribed”.

Figure 11: fragment (h) as possible top-right but corner piece with mouldings.

Letter style

The lettering of (a), (b), (c), (e) and (g) appears to have been carved by the same hand. That of (d) is arguably of a different hand. That of (f) is missing but seems similar to (g) in the *RIB* 642 drawing.

The workshop experts, Yorkshire Museum staff and I engaged in a full search of the store for the missing piece (f) in the course of which we found an 11th piece which, after consulting *RIB* turned out to be the first part of two pieces listed as *RIB* 703. Both had been reported as missing in 1959 (*RCHM Eburacum*, 1959 p132 no. 131). So whilst *RIB* 642 (f) is missing we now have half of *RIB* 703 previously thought lost. This is particularly significant because of the lettering style of the *RIB* 703 and 642 pieces can still be compared even though a piece of each group has been lost since all were drawn by R.G. Collingwood in 1929.

Date

The date of the inscription is difficult to determine. *RIB* 318 is referred to in *RIB* 642 because it contains a very similar inscription: [FORT]VNE ET BONO EVE | NTO ("To Fortune and Bonus Eventus..."), but *RIB* 318 is not dated. Other similar inscriptions appear on several coins including:

BON EVENT
Bona Fortuna
BONAE FORTVNAE
BONI EVENTVS
BONO EVENTVI S C
Bonus Eventus
BONVS EVENTVS AVGVSTVS

(see F.W. Stevenson, F.W. Madden, C.R. Smith (eds), *A Dictionary of Roman Coins, Republican and Imperial*, London 1889, also available via the Numiswiki [Forum on Ancient Coins](#))

On coins of emperors from Galba and Vespasian until the time of Gallienus, Bonus Eventus is represented as a male as on this line drawing of an example of Antoninus Pius struck in AD 139. (See F.W. Stevenson, F.W. Madden, C.R. Smith (eds), *A Dictionary of Roman Coins, Republican and Imperial*, London 1889 p131 s.v. "BONO EVENTUI S.C" (includes illustration), also available via [Numiswiki](#))

RIB 703

Two limestone fragments (one missing).

Dimensions

(from *RIB 703*) 6 x 6 in. The surviving piece is 3 x 3 in.

Findspot

Same area as *RIB 642* (see above)

Decoration

No decoration, but significantly there are easily discernable carving guide lines across the top of the "IV" which would seem to differentiate this inscription from *RIB 642*.

Text

I|IVS|AVG|

Letter dimensions

Only one piece reading "IV" survives. The letter "I" has a 3-4mm wide vertical stem and a 15mm top serif and this letter is 40mm high. The "V" has a 17mm serif and 4 to 5mm wide left diagonal stem.

Letter style

The lettering of *RIB 703* appears to have been carved by a different hand from *RIB 642* as the quality appears superior and the guide lines in *RIB 703* may support this hypothesis. R.P. Wright concluded that the "differences of thickness and the variations in the size of the lettering showed that they belonged to at least two texts" (Collingwood & Wright 1995: 770). Alternatively, the *RIB 703* guidelines could perhaps come from a lower line of *RIB 642* but on balance the styles seem different.

RIB 642 and 703: fragments of a statue base?

Mouldings

Study of the mouldings suggests an alternative arrangement and interpretation of the fragments. The additional piece (h) with mouldings on three sides suggests it would fit at the top left of the monument to the left of (a) in the *RIB 642* sketch. The upper overhanging lip part of (a) does not appear on (h) as there seems to be a break where such a lip has broken off. The left side moulding of (h) aligns with that of (c) but does not align with that of (b) which suggests that (b) should perhaps be inverted (meaning the letter is in fact an "I" rather than an "L") and placed above or below (c) on the right in the *RIB 642* drawing rather than the left.

Hypothesis

Combining the above considerations, particularly of the moulding which reveal surfaces prepared on three sides rather than just one, and up to three different carving scripts, we may have an example of a rare statue base (cf. *RIB 644*) prepared and / or carved on at least three sides with

potentially an earlier better script (RIB 703) and a later lesser script (RIB 642) on the same monument.

Christopher Lillington-Martin, July 2011.

Bibliography

Bodel, J., (ed.), 2001, "Epigraphic Evidence. Ancient History from Inscriptions", Routledge, London & New York: ch. 1 (Bodel).

R.G. Collingwood & R.P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain. I. Inscriptions on stone*, OUP, 2nd edition (1995).

Ephemeris Epigraphica vii 936.

Grasby, R. D., 2004, *Letter Cutting in Stone*, ISBN 0951385828.

Keppie, L.J.F., 1991 or 2001, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions*, Routledge.

RCHM Eburacum, (1959: 132, No. 131).

Watkin Archaeological Journal xxxvi (1879) 165, xxxviii (1881) 297.

Woodhead, A.G., 1981, *The Study of Greek Inscriptions*, 2ed., CUP.