

# The Scottish campaigns of Septimius Severus

by Nicholas Reed

In the years AD 208–10 the emperor Septimius Severus and his son Caracalla were campaigning in Scotland. Agreement on even this point has only been reached in the last few years, and virtually everything else about the campaigns is still matter for dispute. But archaeological evidence has been rapidly accruing in the last ten years, and is apparently now sufficient, when taken in conjunction with our other evidence, for us to erect a framework for the campaigns and to draw some wider conclusions. Our evidence for the campaigns is four-fold: literary, numismatic, epigraphic and archaeological.<sup>1</sup> Of these, the epigraphic is very slight, and the ancient historians are infuriatingly imprecise. We may start by considering the implications of the coins.

Perhaps the most intriguing are two coins which depict bridges and which are dated to 208, though that of Caracalla may belong to 209 (Mattingly 1950, 269, 353, 390). Both bridges can be compared with those appearing on coins of previous emperors. That of Caracalla, which shows a bridge of boats with the legend *TRAIECTVS* underneath, is similar to a bridge on coins of Marcus Aurelius of 172, showing his crossing of the Danube (Mattingly 1940, 624; cf Oman 1931, 137), and is also depicted on the Column of Marcus (Caprino 1955, figs 9, 10). The other coin, of Severus, shows a permanent bridge, which is identical to that issued by Trajan to commemorate his crossing of the Danube (Mattingly 1936, 178–9; Strack 1931, 127; Cichorius 1896, Taf lxxii, Bild xcix).

It is normally suggested that these coins commemorate bridges over the Forth or Tay, or both, and there is no reason to dispute this. Where then were they built? Discussion has focussed round the boat-bridge, and in 1931 Oman argued that it was built across the Forth. This suggestion has since been discounted (e.g. Whittaker 1969, 359), and there are certainly topographical reasons for doubting a crossing at Alloa, where Oman placed it. He admits the position would involve crossing a broad expanse of soft tidal mud. Moreover, no Severan – and hardly any Roman – finds have been made at Alloa, and the Forth is in any case not wide enough here for an impressive bridge. More recently the suggestion has been made that the boat-bridge was situated at Carpow on the Tay (St Joseph 1969, 118; Birley 1971, 258). We can be virtually certain there was some sort of bridge here, because air-photography has detected a bridgehead camp on the N bank of the river, facing the fortress on the south. A bridge of boats here is certainly possible, and it would follow that Severus' permanent bridge was on the Forth – at, say, Oman's site of Alloa. But there are just as strong objections to a permanent bridge as to a boat-bridge at Alloa. In any case, Stirling would be the natural crossing-point. However, we cannot place the permanent bridge at Stirling either. This follows from the discovery of a 63-acre (and therefore Severan) marching-camp at Craigarnhall, which 'lies just to the north of the ford at Old Keir, one of the lowest fords on the Teith, and the importance of the discovery lies in the clue it affords to the Roman crossing of the rivers Forth and Teith and of the marshes between them' (St Joseph 1973, 218). This camp clearly belongs to the double set of 63-acre camps N of the Forth, which

must be dated between AD 208 and 210. Its existence implies one of two things: either they forded Forth and Teith near this point, or they built small field-bridges to cross these rivers. Whichever they did they would not have built a permanent bridge worthy of commemoration on a coin. If Craigarnhall belongs to 208 we could not explain the coin, but if it belongs to 209 or 210 they cannot have rebuilt the permanent Antonine bridge at Stirling in 208, or they would have reused it in 209 or 210, and would not have crossed near Craigarnhall. Stirling, then, may also be ruled out. Nor could we imagine a permanent bridge east of Alloa in 208: Kincardine can be ruled out for the same reasons as Alloa, and below that point the river is far too deep for a Roman permanent bridge.

The hypothesis of a boat-bridge at Carpow, then, while unobjectionable in itself, obliges us to suppose a permanent bridge somewhere across the Forth in order to explain the other coin. But that leads into an impasse, since there seems to be nowhere along the Forth where we might even hypothetically assume a permanent bridge in 208 worthy of such commemoration. We must therefore go back one stage, and examine the alternative view, which is to suppose a permanent bridge across the Tay.

Given the virtual certainty of a bridge at Carpow, this might be the site of a permanent one. The road which fronts the *principia* in the fortress, and the NE/SW axis of the bridgehead camp at St Madoes both point to almost exactly the same point of the river, just before the river starts to widen to embrace Mugdrum Island. The width of clear water just before the river widens is only 300 yards, leaving 400 yards of marsh and reeds on either side to be negotiated before firm ground is reached. Erosion of the S half of St Madoes camp shows that the distance would have been even less in Roman times. Thus, the siting of the permanent fortress indicates that when this was built any bridge would have crossed at this western point, and this is the obvious position for a bridge in AD 208 also. The making of a roadway through 800 yards of boggy ground might well call forth comment in our sources: certainly, it ought to indicate some of the preparations which we are told were involved. Herodian's *pontes* are not ordinary bridges over water, because the description he gives is clearly of the technique used to cross marshes by log-causeways (Herodian iii, 14, 5; Reed 1975; Uslar 1971). Such causeways must have been used at Carpow to approach the bridge across the river. There seems no reason to doubt the practicability of a 300-yard long permanent wooden bridge at Carpow. The river is never more than twenty feet deep at this point, and in fact, compared with the 1100-yard length of Trajan's bridge (and Severus' coin invites the comparison), the bridge itself was perhaps not all that impressive. On the other hand, the causeways through the marshes would indeed have been an impressive technical feat, and to the natives the complete structure should have been just as over-awing as that built by Julius Caesar across the Rhine to reach the Sugambri. Here the natives were terrified in looking upon 'Rhenum suum sic ponte quasi iugo captum' (Caesar *BG*, vi, 9; Florus i, 45, 15). A 'captured Tay' may have roused similar feelings in the inhabitants of Scotland. At any rate, the existence of this bridge is a hypothesis we can test: excavation could well reveal traces either of the causeways buried among the reeds, or remains of the piles of the bridge in the river-bed.

A permanent bridge on the Tay, then, is certainly a possibility, and this hypothesis requires a boat-bridge on the lower Forth in 208. The idea that Caracalla could have had a boat-bridge built where the Forth Railway Bridge now stands, between North and South Queensferry, did indeed occur to Oman, but he dismissed it for various reasons, and concluded that if such a feat had been carried out, 'It would indeed have been a *TRAIECTUS* worthy of commemoration in a first brass or a medallion, not merely a modest *dupondius*'. It is ironic, therefore, that he continues, 'It seems hardly possible to doubt that since this coin was struck for Caracalla, there

must have been a similar one for his father Severus. But if only one specimen of Caracalla's issue survives, there is every reason why the chance of fortune should have obliterated his father's corresponding coinage altogether.' As we have seen, the corresponding coin *has* survived – it merely came to light after Oman wrote – but this drives home the fact that we cannot argue from the absence of a coin (more particularly, a medallion) that it did not exist. There may very well have been first brasses or medallions commemorating the *TRAIECTUS*, but the more valuable a coin, the more likely it was to be melted down and the metal reused later. Oman's other objections have rather greater force. 'The width of the Forth, though so much smaller than at any other point till one reaches Alloa going up stream, is 2,765 yards – a mile and two-thirds – . . . and I think that such a width makes impossible any idea of a bridge of boats, when one considers the size of Roman vessels, and the sway of the tides on such an enormous breadth of water, not to speak of the danger from storms.' Before dealing with these objections, it may be as well to draw up a brief conspectus of ancient boat-bridges and their potentialities.

The best known boat-bridge of antiquity is that of Xerxes, who 'yoked' the Hellespont to cross into Europe. His bridge was seven stades – that is, about 1400 yards – long (Herodotus vii, 36), and the boats supporting it were anchored against a steady five-knot current. It was partly to outdo him that Caligula had his own bridge built, the longest known in antiquity; built in AD 39, it stretched from Puteoli to Bauli, a distance of over three miles. Recently, what seems to be a mooring-block for the bridge was found near Bauli, and it is fully consonant in size (Paget 1971, 33, 37; Dio lix, 17; Suetonius *Cal*, 19). Now in deep water, it is a square block of Roman concrete 10 m high and 30 m square at the base, tapering to 20 m square at the top, which would originally have been level with the surface. The bridge itself was a double line of ships joined together, on top of which a mound of earth was heaped and fashioned to resemble the Appian Way, complete with resting-places and lodging-houses along it. It only lasted two days before Caligula grew tired of it, but there were more permanent boat-bridges in the Empire: one at Zeugma in Syria (Pliny *NH*, v, 86), and another at Arles, which is apparently that depicted on a mosaic at Ostia. Temporary boat-bridges to attain a military objective were much more commonplace. The equivalent of the modern military pontoon bridge, their advantage was and is that they enable a large body of troops to cross much more quickly and safely than by ferry, and they also enable heavy equipment to be transported across water without having to be dismantled first. Dio says, 'Rivers are bridged by the Romans with the greatest of ease, since the soldiers are always practising bridge-building, which is carried on like any other warlike exercise, on the Ister, Rhine and Euphrates'. He goes on to describe in detail one method of constructing such boat-bridges.<sup>2</sup>

Oman's figure for the width of the Forth of 2,765 yards is a gross overestimate: the actual width is about 1,800 yards, not that much wider than the Hellespont. He also fails to mention the equally important fact that the estuary is neatly divided at this point by the small rocky island of Inch Garvie, so two bridges of much shorter length would have been required. From North Queensferry to the tip of Inch Garvie is some 550 yards, while from Inch Garvie to the nearest point of land to the south, Long Craig Gate, is just under 1,000 yards – 400 yards less than the length of Xerxes' bridge. In itself, then, the length would be but a small problem.

A more substantial difficulty would be the depth of the water. Thus, between North Queensferry and Inch Garvie it can be as much as 180 feet, and averages about 150. Between Inch Garvie and Long Craig Gate, the southern 600 yards is only nine feet or less in depth, but the other 400 yards can be as much as 200 feet. In one way, of course, this depth is an advantage: it means that the current is much less strong than one might otherwise expect, and ships could be anchored even in 200 feet of water – ancient cables could be far longer than this. Thus, the bridge might have been constructed in the usual way, by sending the boats down one by one, and

anchoring them in turn. Alternatively, Caligula's mooring-block indicates that, where water was exceptionally deep, a big mooring-block at the end could suffice for an immense boat-bridge. Across the Forth, such blocks would not have been necessary: there is plenty of room on the shore for placing the winches or bollards necessary; in Italy, the sheer cliffs may have prevented this at the S end. If this technique of fastening the bridge were adopted on the Forth, they may have followed the practice attested by the Anonymus Byzantinus, of building the bridge to the required length alongside the riverbank, and then towing it into its correct position. They could then have let down one or two large anchors (or the baskets of rocks described by Dio) into the deep water, for extra stability.

I would therefore suggest that a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile bridge of boats, divided near the middle by Inch Garvie, was constructed under the guidance of Caracalla where the Forth Railway Bridge now stands. This is less than three miles from the important Severan harbour and stores-base at Cramond, so that it would have been a simple matter for supplies to be brought by sea to Cramond and then carried across the bridge. This was the *TRAIECTUS* Caracalla celebrates in AD 208, showing both Severus and himself marching across the bridge. Unfortunately, there is little hope of finding archaeological evidence for it now.

However, if it were true that the two points where the army crossed in AD 208 were Queensferry and Carpow, we might hope to find some traces of the route it took between those points, and such traces could add support to the case for a crossing at Queensferry. The route taken in AD 208 has in fact been a major source of puzzlement. Dio lays stress on road-building generally: 'Severus encountered numerous difficulties in cutting down the forests, levelling the heights, filling up the swamps and bridging rivers'. As Richmond says, 'Much preparation of roads was undertaken in marshy country, a description suitable to Angus and the Mearns or to Fife, but hardly to the long-established land-route between Forth and Tay' (1955, 58). If we have correctly located the two crossing-points concerned, the most natural assumption would be a new road in Fife, running in a reasonably direct line between Queensferry and Carpow. And indeed, if Severus was already planning to campaign in Scotland, it would be sensible to build a permanent roadway at least as far as Carpow.

There are several finds which support this hypothetical route. First is the recent discovery of a 63-acre (and thus Severan) marching-camp at Auchtermuchty, five miles SSE of Carpow (St Joseph 1965, 82). Second, there is a report of a 'rectangular and rectilinear inclosure, within which was found a silver coin of Pertinax'; this was seen before 1812 and (if we can trust the report) must surely have been another Severan marching-camp, situated about two miles east of Lochore, near Auchterderran (Macdonald 1917, 169; Crawford 1949, 146). Lastly, a hoard of more than 600 coins ranging from Galba to Severus was discovered in 1851 at Portmoak on the east side of Loch Leven (Macdonald 1918, 264). Most naturally interpreted as hidden by a soldier on Severus' campaigns, these coins should be on or near to the line of march.<sup>3</sup> The line of the Severan road of AD 208, then, may well lie from North Queensferry via Auchterderran, then east of Loch Leven, and via Auchtermuchty to Carpow. If the road was here we could also explain why it has not so far been detected. Many stretches would lie through marshy ground, so that, instead of the normal stone-paved or gravelled *agger*, one would only expect to find the log-causeway by excavation: either in ground which has remained marshy, or by detecting the tell-tale change in soil colour which would attest decayed wood.<sup>4</sup>

At the beginning of the campaigns, Herodian stresses the preparations for war, including the building of log-roads. He continues, 'Once the preparations for war seemed to be satisfactorily completed, Severus summoned Geta, and left him to . . . carry on the civil administration of the empire. Antoninus he took with him, and advanced against the barbarians.' The impression

given is of a substantial time spent in such preparations *before* an advance against the enemy. These preparations were apparently those which we have deduced were taking place in Fife, which suggests that in 208 Fife was not hostile.

At this point we can turn to the dating of Severus' campaigns, which are generally accepted to have taken place between AD 208 and 210. Since our sources suggest there were only two campaigns, the second has been dated to 210, and the first to '208-9'. Now, recent writers almost all agree that the Maeatae were in Fife. So if we suppose that the year 208 was concerned only with a march through their peaceful territory, and preparations for the advance north, we can then neatly slot the two fighting campaigns into the years 209 and 210. The most convenient assumption would thus be that the Maeatae did not resist in 208. Perhaps a bargain was struck, whereby the Romans agreed not to take revenge on them for their hostility in some previous year, on condition that the Maeatae allowed them to build their roads and bridges without continual sabotage.

We may now consider the campaigns of 209-10, for which our most important evidence is the marching-camps. There are two major sets of camps which have now been fairly securely dated to the Severan period (St Joseph 1969, 105f; 1973, 216f). One set, 63 acres in size, has a few examples S of the Forth, but the main series runs in two roughly parallel lines, the north-western as far as Keithock, the other up to Kinnell, but almost certainly aiming for the Montrose Basin. The second series is of 165 acres S of the Forth, but then drops to 130 acres and continues up at least as far as Kair House, 12 miles N of Montrose. We should most naturally expect the more northerly (130-acre) set to belong to the final campaign of 210, and the other set to 209; archaeology has offered support for this by showing the 63-acre set to be earlier.<sup>5</sup> St Joseph suggests that the 63-acre camps, in two lines, mark a 'round trip' by one force. But 63 acres is almost exactly half the size of 130 acres, and it is most unlikely that half the army was not being used during the first advance into hostile territory. It is much more likely that in AD 209 the army was divided into two, and led, no doubt, by Severus and Caracalla.

We may be able to go further, if we consider the question of numbers. It is normally assumed that Severus had three legions for these campaigns - the three stationed in Britain - and that when brought together 'with a substantial number of auxiliaries or other troops' they occupied the 130-acre camps (cf Richmond 1967, 62). But R E Smith has shown that Severus also took at least part of the praetorian guard with him (1972, 488, n 41). Its strength was now 10,000, which is virtually the equivalent of two legions. We can also be almost certain that Severus brought the new legion II Parthica with him as well.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Severus probably had the equivalent of six, not three, legions campaigning in Scotland.

Bearing this in mind, it is interesting to consider the size of the marching-camps. Normally it is assumed that a 20-acre camp would have accommodated one legion. Thus Frere, building on an idea of Richmond (1934, 50f), refers to the 20-acre camp at Rey Cross as holding one legion, and the 61-acre camp near Neath, he says, 'would theoretically hold three legions' (1974, 121). This is also the most plausible interpretation of the Severan 63-acre camps - but it follows that 130 acres should represent a force equivalent to six legions, which fits nicely with the force detailed above. Now, it might be objected that by the Severan period it was a common practice for detachments of legions to be taken on campaign, rather than whole ones: the reason presumably being to avoid any frontier being excessively weakened if whole legions were taken from it. But this could not apply in Britain, where temporary removal of the legions from Caerleon, Chester and York could not conceivably endanger the frontier.<sup>7</sup>

Let us return to the suggestion that the army was divided in two, and led by the two Augusti, who advanced in parallel, planting 63-acre camps as they went. Severus would presumably take with him his Praetorian Guard and II Parthica, while Caracalla would lead the three

legions stationed in Britain. He was thus in charge of legions who were used to fighting in Britain, and he was also quite fit, unlike his father, who suffered from gout. Thus Caracalla will have taken the potentially more hostile western route, following Agricola's old route as far as Keithock. Severus will have taken the eastern route, crossing the bridge at Carpow. And by the end of the year, matters had gone sufficiently well for them to claim the title *BRITANNICVS*.

We turn now to the function of the navy in these campaigns. Its activities are attested in various ways. The most evident is the establishment of stores-bases at South Shields, Cramond and Carpow. All these were clearly turned into such depots because of their proximity to good harbours. Coins of Neptune and Oceanus dated to AD 209 must also attest fleet activity. That other fleets were involved as well is shown by an inscription set up to a Prefect of the Fleets of Britain, Germany, Moesia and Pannonia, all apparently combined for the expedition.<sup>8</sup> Presumably they were taking part in a joint campaign with the army, something of which we have a splendid description in chapter 25 of the 'Agricola'. In this year (82) Agricola used his fleet to explore harbours 'quia infesta hostili exercitu itinera'. Severus, wise to the same considerations, followed a safe route through Fife in 208. But in 210 we have observed the drop from 165 to 130 acres once the Forth is crossed. We could link this with an inscription from Corbridge (RIB 1143) mentioning someone in charge of the granaries during Severus' expeditions. This must imply that Corbridge held supplies, which were presumably to be sent up Dere Street – and Dere Street was used in 210, as the 165-acre camps show. Thus, the extra 35 acres are likely to designate an enormous baggage train, and indicate that much of the grain went by ship north from the Forth.<sup>9</sup> This is also suggested by the many coins of *ANNONA* in 209–10.

Agricola succeeded in bringing the natives to battle at Mons Graupius, and the resultant massacre must have crippled them for years. Severus presumably intended a similar result. What he did not anticipate was the natives' unwillingness to provide him with a second Mons Graupius. By this time they had learned the lesson taken to heart by modern guerillas: that guerilla tactics are the only, but highly effective, defence of primitive peoples against forces vastly superior in equipment and organisation. As Dio says, 'Severus fought no battle and beheld no enemy in battle array' (lxxvi, 13, 2); he also makes it clear that Roman army losses were alarmingly high. Nevertheless when Severus finally returned from the north, 'he had forced the Britons to come to terms, on condition that they abandon a large part of their territory'. The reason for their surrender and concessions is obscure; possibly they surrendered because of lack of supplies. At any rate, Severus regarded this surrender as sufficient to claim a *Victoria*, and the *SHA*, referring to his return, shows that he regarded the Scottish problem as finally settled: 'Post murum apud Luguuallum visum in Britannia, cum ad proximam mansionem rediret non solum victor sed etiam in aeternum pace fundata . . .' (*Vita Severi* 22, 4).

However, whatever the details of this settlement, it must have been invalidated by later events, since it was also in 210 that the Maeatae, followed by the Caledonians, revolted. Dio tells us that this revolt of the Maeatae occurred after Severus' return from the north, so probably in the second half of 210. The reason for their revolt has often been put down to the severity of the terms imposed on them earlier. That is possible, though the terms mentioned above were apparently imposed only on the Caledonians, so we should have to imagine harsher terms imposed on the Maeatae as well, in spite of their quiescence from 208. But the reason may alternatively be that Severus' very failure to inflict a military defeat on the Caledonians persuaded the Maeatae to adopt similar guerilla tactics. Severus retaliated by sending the army to carry out a policy of wholesale extermination. Given that the settlement with Caledonia seemed to have settled the Scottish problem finally, we can well imagine the exasperation which must have prompted him to this policy.

Dio continues, 'When this had been done, and the Caledonians had joined the revolt of the Maeatae, he started preparations to make war on them in person. But while he was thus engaged, his sickness carried him off on the fourth of February (211).' In other words, the Caledonians only joined the revolt once Severus had embarked on his brutal policy towards the Maeatae. There can be little doubt that that was the reason why they revolted as well: they were not going to stand idly by while their fellow countrymen were being systematically massacred. We can also deduce that the revolt of the Maeatae started late in the year. The Caledonians must have joined in fairly soon after the massacre started, but Dio implies that by that time it was too late in the year for Severus to deal with them also. If we also take a rescript of the Emperors datelined York, 5th May 210 as evidence that they were still in York at that time (Cod Just, 3, 31, 1; Birley 1971, 267), we may reasonably conjecture that the major campaign, now led by Caracalla alone (as Herodian III, 15, 1 implies), started in June, was over by September at latest, and the Maeatae revolted in September or October.

Returning to the events preceding the occupation of Fife in 208, the archaeological evidence consists in the series of 63-acre camps S of the Forth, of which only three have been discovered so far: Kirkpatrick, seven miles north of Burgh-by-Sands on Hadrian's Wall, and probable examples at Castlecraig and Eskbank near the Forth. Their size should indicate a force equivalent to three legions advancing from the Wall, and if assigned to AD 208 or 209 we should have to suppose that a more easterly set, to contain the other half of Severus' army, has not yet been detected. This is possible, though unlikely. AD 210 may be ruled out, as the army in this year is accounted for by the 165-acre camps. This campaign in the territory of the Selgovae, then, may rather belong to 207, and may have been undertaken by the three British legions, not by the forces brought by Severus in 208. If there were no further evidence we should most naturally assign this campaign to the governor Senecio. But there is other evidence. It is still sometimes assumed that coins of 208 with PROF AUGG indicate the departure of the Emperors from Rome in that year (Jarrett 1970, 199). This will not do: the coins are repeated in 209, when they can only indicate departure from their British base to the Scottish front, and the coins of 208 may indicate the same.<sup>10</sup> But coins clearly indicate that Caracalla was active in 207 in some province. There are several Caracallan issues of 207 showing Mars, others with Virtus, i.e. his military prowess, and most significant, some showing him with captives and a river-god (Mattingly 1950, clx). These just might refer to some mysterious and badly-documented events on the Continent. They are more commonly thought to refer to Britain (Richmond 1955, 57f). To add to them there is another coin, or medallion, on which stress can be laid (Cohen 1880, vol. IV, 3; Gneecchi 1912, II, 73). Dated to 207 and inscribed ADVENT(us) AVG(usti) GALL(iae), it shows Severus alone on horseback arriving at the walls of a city. There is no reason to dispute its genuineness,<sup>11</sup> and the singular AVG and depiction of Severus alone strongly suggest that he was *not* accompanied by Caracalla on his arrival in Gaul, whatever impression the historians give to the contrary. Given the prominence which Caracalla has on the British coinage in 209-10 it is inconceivable that he arrived *after* Severus, and much the simplest view is that he was already in Britain in 207. In that case, it was probably he who led the British legions through the territory of the Selgovae in 207; the captives on his coin will be from that tribe, and the river may be the Solway Firth.

If Caracalla was already in Britain in 207, and Severus in Gaul, we may then turn to the rescripts from 208. The first two, of the 12th and 18th of February, were issued by Caracalla alone. That of the 10th of March, and four of the other five rescripts of this year, were issued by the joint Augusti.<sup>12</sup> The natural conclusion is that Severus joined his son in Britain between 18th February and 10th March. We may now offer an explanation for a puzzling coin of 208; this is a rare type depicting Severus seated as a magistrate on a curule chair, being crowned by Victory

and resting his elbow on a kneeling figure, and the legend is VICTORIAE AVGG (Mattingly 1950, clii). Since both Emperors were in Britain in 208, this is not likely to refer to Africa. Rather, it might commemorate the resumption of Roman administrative power over Fife. The non-military character and attitude of the figure of Severus suit the diplomatic agreement deduced above, and the kneeling figure in that case would be a member of the Maeatae.

*Summary of the campaigns*

207 Caracalla comes to Britain. Conducts campaign with the 3 British legions from Hadrian's Wall up to the Forth, through territory of Selgovae. Severus arrives in Gaul.

208 Uncontested advance of both Augusti through Fife (Maeatae), establishing bridges at Queensferry and Carpow with a road between.

209 Caracalla advances with 3 British legions against Caledonians, close to old Agricola route up to Keithock. Severus with Praetorian Guard and II Parthica advances via Carpow to Kinnell (and probably Montrose); both leave 63-acre camps. Fleet, drawn from 4 navies, brings supplies north from South Shields.

210 Advance of all forces, with supplies, from Corbridge to Inveresk, planting 165-acre camps. Army, under Caracalla, continues near old Agricola route at least as far as Kair House, planting 130-acre camps. Fleet sails N from Cramond, taking supplies. Extensive casualties; no big battle; concessions made by Caledonians. Fleet circumnavigates Britain and Victory claimed. Late in year, Maeatae revolt. Severus' attempted genocide provokes Caledonians to revolt as well.

*The Purpose of Severus' Campaigns*

In the case of Agricola, no historian tells us his purpose in invading Scotland, but no one doubts that he did intend to occupy SE Scotland, if not more. Our evidence, normally accepted as conclusive, is the building of the permanent fortress, intended for the 20th Legion, at Inchtuthil. If a force was going to be stationed here permanently, they must have intended to keep a hold on the land around. But in that case the establishment of the permanent fort at Carpow indicates a similar intention on Severus' part to hold the surrounding land, and its demolition soon after no more negates this intention than the similar demolition of Inchtuthil. One argument has been given against this view: 'It is evident from Severus' neglect to garrison the lowlands that he was not intending a permanent occupation of Scotland' (Frere 1974, 201). But if Severus felt confident of victory in the far north he may have thought garrisons unnecessary in the lowlands.

What was so special about Fife, sufficient to warrant Roman occupation? Birley (1936) dismissed the possibility that coal there should have been sufficiently important to make Fife valuable; nor should we expect salt by itself to be any more important: there were plenty of salt-pans elsewhere in Britain. On the other hand, Fife cannot have been so marshy that corn-growing and farming were impossible, and we might link this up with the very high frequency of coins depicting ANNONA in AD 209 and especially 210. These may simply be a reference to the importance of the fleet in bringing supplies north. But we might also see in them a reference to the fact (if it was one) that the Maeatae were now paying tribute in corn, like any other state in Britain or the Empire. Indeed, tribes through whose territory the Romans were marching normally had to contribute more to the *annona* than in time of peace. Also, their subordinate or neutral position towards Rome must have produced a useful buffer state against the Caledonians, and, when they were peaceful, the risk of attacks on the E half of the Antonine Wall must have been greatly reduced. Any one of these factors in isolation was perhaps insufficient to make their subjection seem worth while. Nevertheless, the combination of buffer-state, and its resources in coal, salt

and especially grain, would probably have appeared enough to pay for the extra troops installed in it. When not occupied, their friendly disposition would itself be useful in maintaining security along the Antonine Wall.

The Severan plan, then, involved an occupation at least of Fife. Did he intend anything further? According to Dio (lxxvi, 13, 1), he intended to conquer the *whole* of the island. It has sometimes been suggested that Agricola's plan was to occupy and garrison the whole of the Scottish Highlands. Analogies are drawn with the mountainous areas of Wales and Spain, which *were* both occupied. However, there are two vital differences between these countries and Scotland. Both the Welsh and Spanish mountains contained goldmines, and such mines ranked very high on the list of desirable attributes of prospective provinces. They might offer a return on the investment of troops in their locality, and provide a considerable profit as well. Mineral resources were always an important consideration in Roman aggrandisement, as shown, for example, by the extraction of lead from the Mendips as early as AD 49. But Scotland had no such resources, as far as they knew. Secondly, unlike Scotland, neither Wales nor NW Spain could be easily cut off from the pacified areas by a *limes* – indeed, a *limes* cutting off Wales would have to run for more than 100 miles. Scotland was far greater than Wales in area, but it could be, and for some time was, cut off from the province by a *limes* only forty miles long. We may conclude that the government in Rome is very unlikely seriously to have considered occupation and garrisoning of the Highlands.

### *The Aftermath*

We turn lastly to the results of the campaigns. Whatever concessions may have been extracted from either Scottish tribe by Severus in AD 210, the terms of the agreements cannot have lasted, since in 211 both tribes were in revolt, and Severus was planning to lead a further expedition, when he died in February. But actually the situation was worse than that: at no point previously during the campaigns had *both* tribes been actively hostile. From 208 to the summer of 210 the Maeatae stayed quiescent; the Caledonians seemed to have been conquered before the Maeatae revolted later in 210. Such was the Emperor's exasperation at this setback when everything seemed settled that he lashed out in genocide, thus bringing the Caledonians into revolt as well. Naturally, after all this it would be an intolerable loss of face for Severus to withdraw, even though three years of campaigning had now in practice merely worsened the situation. However, it is hardly surprising that once his father was dead, Caracalla gave up all the grandiose schemes of conquest, and decided to withdraw all major forces to Hadrian's Wall, however costly that line was to maintain. His new frontier policy involved patrolling N of the Wall and apparently a check on meetings of the Scottish tribes. But in the end, Severus' attempt to solve the Scottish problem once and for all was forgotten. The northernmost frontier of Empire stayed at Hadrian's Wall until the end of the Roman occupation.

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### NOTES

- 1 The principal references may be found in Birley 1971, chap xvi; references here will be confined largely to those not already in Birley. The other major recent discussion is in Frere 1974, 194f.

- 2 Dio lxxi, from Suidas s.v. ζεύγμα. Another account, perhaps from firsthand experience, in Arrian *Anab.* v, 7. The Anonymus Byzantinus *περὶ στρατηγικῆς* c. 19 gives a general account of such bridges; cf. also Tac. *Hist.* ii, 34. For discussion of their representation on Trajan's Column cf Richmond 1935, 5–6. But I cannot credit his 'pontoons lying between each pair of boats' – these are surely small cabins on the boats, visible on single boats elsewhere on the Column.
- 3 For this interpretation, see the evidence of Robertson 1971, 134 n 10, which militates against the traditional view (repeated in her text) that these hoards were hidden by natives. One can note that two of the other three such hoards were also found near the known line of march.
- 4 However, parts would be of normal construction. I suggest that a well-preserved stretch, later used in medieval times, survives running from Easter Lumbennie (NGR NO 238163) past Macduff's Cross straight to Carpow.
- 5 Note also that the western line of 63-acre camps (close to the line of the 130-acre ones) is more closely spaced, as is natural if it indicates the first campaign through hostile territory.
- 6 Smith 1972. Unknown to him, there is direct archaeological evidence of this legion's presence: a standard depicting a centaur found at Spennithorne in Yorkshire (cf Taylor 1944, 24–5). Its findspot suggests it was in the ditch of a marching camp.
- 7 Only one legionary detachment from abroad is specifically attested for this campaign: CIL xiii, 3496. There may have been a few others, or there may not. The only other evidence for the size of the expeditionary force is Dio's statement (lxxvi, 13, 2) that Severus lost a full 50,000 men in Britain. The reliability of this total can be judged on reflecting that it would be the equivalent of more than eight legions. For similar wild overestimates of army or casualty totals in Dio, cf Townend 1964, 479f.
- 8 CIL vi, 1643. The wording seems to imply – and I see no reason to doubt – that virtually the entire fleets of these four countries were being used. No difficulty in obtaining enough ships for the boat-bridge, either.
- 9 Another possibility is that it represents a body of auxiliaries who were sent to guard the Antonine Wall (cf St Joseph 1973, 231). This is less likely, in particular because they would surely have been left to guard the Wall during the previous winter, and thus would not have formed part of the force sent out in the spring. But it is remarkable that not one auxiliary detachment is *specifically* attested as taking part in these campaigns – though several have been suggested as possibilities.
- 10 One may compare the ADVENTVS AVGVSTI coin of Severus of 210, which can only refer to his return to the base at York (where he died): Mattingly 1950, clxxiv.
- 11 The only reason ever given for suspecting it is that of Cohen, who said that Severus' journey to Britain through Gaul could only have been in AD 209 or 210. On the contrary, we now know he was in Britain by AD 208 at latest, and thus may well have been in Gaul in 207. Gneccchi merely followed Cohen in his doubts, and Birley, Gneccchi; neither had independent reasons for doubt.
- 12 *Cod Just.* 8, 25, 2; 2, 11, 9; 3, 28, 4. For other rescripts from 208–10, see Birley 1971, 267. All rescripts from 209 and 210 were issued by the joint Augusti, except one from 13 January 209. That one was a judgement delivered by Severus *in persona*, but Caracalla may well have been present.

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