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A Geological Link between the Facilis Monument at Colchester and First-Century Army Tombstones from the Rhineland Frontier. K.M.J. Hayward writes: The geological source of the Marcus Favonius Facilis funerary monument (*RIB* 200) from Colchester has always been assumed to derive from 'Bath stone', an ambiguous quarryman's term that encompasses a whole series of freestones worked in the Cotswold District. Colchester, however, is geographically isolated from this outcrop²⁹ and the rest of the Middle Jurassic escarpment that extends across South-Central England from Humberside to Dorset (FIG. 3).

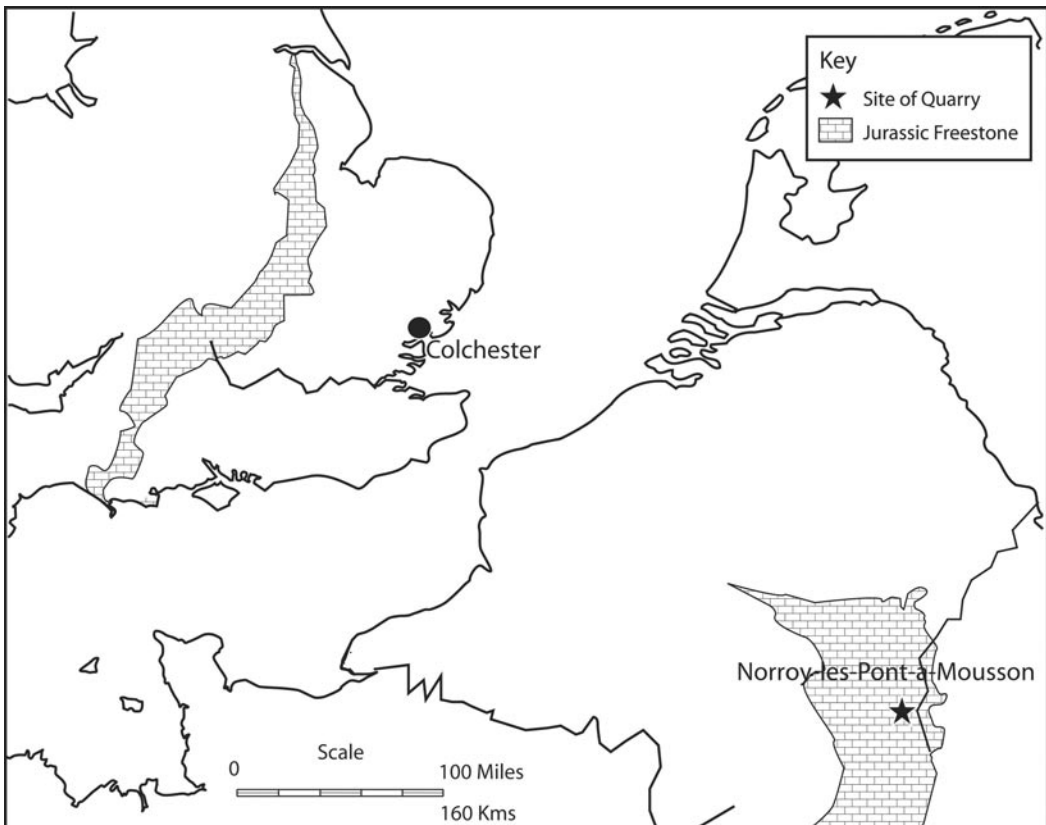


FIG. 3. Map showing the position of Colchester in relation to the Middle Jurassic freestones from Southern England and the Lothringer Freestone of Eastern France.

²⁹ Blagg 1990, 34–5.

In order to confirm whether or not *Facilis* was carved from this material, in 2001 a sample was obtained from the rear of the monument, housed at the Castle Museum, Colchester. The sample then underwent a series of tests to assess its geological character: petrological, mineralogical (X-ray diffraction), and geochemical (X-ray fluorescence, stable isotope analysis (carbon and oxygen), and ICPOES (Inductively Coupled Plasma Optical Emission Spectroscopy)). Comparison with a reference collection of British and French Jurassic freestones determined the source of the tombstone.

The results refute the traditional British, West Country geological source. Instead, a precise match was made with a freestone from Eastern France: the Middle Jurassic Lothringer Freestone (Calcaires à Polypiers) from the Département of Moselle (FIG. 3). Furthermore, this rock-type was also identified in a sample taken from a reused fragment of an inscription, believed to have originally formed part of the Temple of Claudius precinct at Colchester.³⁰ The rock is visible as a distinctive, coral-rich limestone in thin-section and not the typical, spherically grained (oolitic limestone) freestones of Bath (FIG. 4). In addition, its geochemical signature was atypical of any British limestone from the Jurassic escarpment (Table 2a and b).

The disused quarry near Norroy-les-Pont-à-Mousson, from where comparative geological samples were obtained, had epigraphic evidence for military-controlled quarrying operations during the first century A.D.³¹ Furthermore, examples of this freestone had previously been identified in first-century

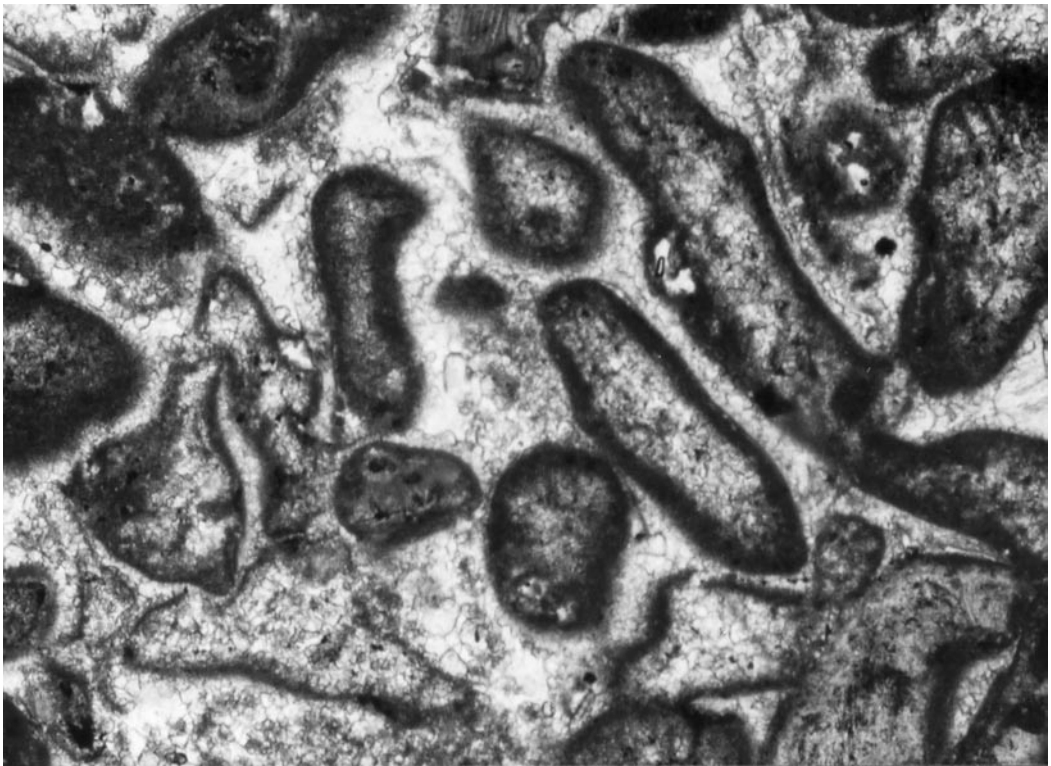


FIG. 4. Photomicrograph of the geological texture (x40) from a sample taken from the Marcus Favonius Facilis tombstone. Rock type: Lothringer Freestone.

³⁰ Drury 1984, 37.

³¹ Bedon 1984, 212.

TABLE 2A. COMPARABLE STABLE ISOTOPE READINGS (CARBON AND OXYGEN) FOR THE MARCUS FAVONIUS FACILIS TOMBSTONE AND THE POSSIBLE TEMPLE OF CLAUDIUS PRECINCT INSCRIPTION FROM COLCHESTER, THE TIBERIUS IULIUS PANCUIUS TOMBSTONE FROM NEUSS, AND FOUR OUTCROP SAMPLES OBTAINED FROM THE DISUSED QUARRIES AT NORROY-LES-PONT-

Archaeological Sample Number and Name	Stable Isotope Values (‰)	
	¹³ C	¹⁸ O
KH25a Marcus Favonius Facilis tombstone Colchester	+2.29	-3.87
KH45 Temple of Claudius Inscription Colchester	+2.12	-3.59
KH198 Tiberius Julius Pancuius tombstone Neuss	+2.17	-4.72
Outcrop Sample Number and Name		
KH150 Loose Block 1 Norroy-les-Pont-à-Mousson	+2.48	-3.26
KH152 Outcrop 2 Norroy-les-Pont-à-Mousson	+1.97	-4.61
KH5b 18 Outcrop 3 Norroy-les-Pont-à-Mousson	+2.21	-4.98
KH6 20 Loose Block 4 Norroy-les-Pont-à-Mousson	+2.11	-4.00

TABLE 2B. COMPARABLE XRF (X-RAY FLUORESCENCE) READINGS FOR STRONTIUM (SR) FOR THE MARCUS FAVONIUS FACILIS TOMBSTONE AND OUTCROP SAMPLES OBTAINED FROM THE DISUSED QUARRIES AT NORROY-LES-PONT-À-MOUSSON

Archaeological and Outcrop Sample Number and Name	XRF Values (ppm) Strontium
KH25a Marcus Favonius Facilis tombstone	584
KH152 Outcrop Norroy-les-Pont-à-Mousson	445
KH5a19 Outcrop Norroy-les-Pont-à-Mousson	586

military tombstones from the Rhineland frontier at Bonn³² and Mainz³³ and in monumental architecture and altars at Maastricht,³⁴ Nijmegen,³⁵ Cologne,³⁶ and Strasbourg.³⁷ Its recent identification in the monumental architecture from the Augustan base at Waldgirmes³⁸ extended the use of this stone beyond the Rhine frontier along its eastern tributaries.

The author also took a sample from the Tiberius Iulius Pancuius funerary monument at the Clemens-Sels-Museum at Neuss.³⁹ In this case, the objective was to determine whether the pre-invasion base of Legion XX at Neuss⁴⁰ (and therefore of Facilis) was using the same material. Again the results showed that Lothringer Freestone had been used (Table 2a).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Two important points need to be highlighted here. First, the Marcus Favonius Facilis funerary monument can reasonably be dated on epigraphic and stylistic grounds to before the foundation of the *colonia* at

³² Bauchhenß 1979, 12.

³³ Stribrny 1987, 102.

³⁴ Stuart and Bogaers 2001, 18.

³⁵ Panhuysen 2002, 13.

³⁶ Röder 1960, 38.

³⁷ Bedon, *op. cit.* (note 31), fig. 14.

³⁸ Waldgirmes is sited along the Lahn Valley, a tributary of the Rhine: Carroll 2002, 37.

³⁹ Noelke 1977, 6.

⁴⁰ Frere 1987, 48.

Colchester in A.D. 49.⁴¹ This makes it the earliest known example of carved freestone from Britannia. Second, as we have seen, only one other example of this freestone (possibly to be associated with the construction of the temple precinct at Colchester) has been identified from southern Britain.⁴² The restricted use of this freestone to at least one tombstone and inscription from Colchester therefore has some important implications.

The Lothringer Freestone had a soft texture and open porosity that had already been proven at military sites along the Rhine⁴³ to be conducive to fine carving and detailed inscription. From this one might infer that the native freestone resources from the Middle Jurassic escarpment of South-Central England had not been fully surveyed nor investigated for their worth as decorative stonework at the time when the continental material was being used.

The full-figured style for which the Facilis tomb provides such a good example was prevalent in many tombstones along the Rhineland frontier during the middle of the first century A.D. A petrological match between Facilis and some of these tombstones merely reinforces this stylistic link with the Continent. For example, the stylistically comparable Genialis monument from Mainz⁴⁴ was also constructed out of Lothringer Freestone.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the sampled Pancuius monument from the pre-invasion base of Legion XX at Neuss was also stylistically comparable and made from this freestone. The Facilis tombstone would therefore have been carved by a continental, probably legionary, craftsman who worked a freestone with which he was familiar. The monument could have been carved at Colchester or partly worked on the Continent during the lifetime of Facilis and completed at Colchester after his death.

It has been suggested that the inscription derived from the Temple of Claudius, but we cannot, of course, be certain of the date when it was carved. If we are to associate the use of imported stone from the Continent with the earliest use of freestone at Colchester, it is more likely that the inscription is to be associated with a legionary building, perhaps the *principia*.

This petrological match can also be used as supporting material evidence to link the invasion with the fortresses at which three of the legions had been based in Germany. The pre-invasion bases of Legion II at Strasbourg, Legion XIV Gemina at Mainz, and Legion XX at Neuss⁴⁶ all have evidence for the use of Lothringer Freestone during the first century A.D.⁴⁷ Any one of these legions could therefore have had direct or indirect access to freestone at the imperial-controlled army quarries at Norroy-les-Pont-à-Mousson.

To summarise, a sample taken from the Claudian Marcus Favonius Facilis monument at Colchester was petrologically and geochemically identical with quarry samples identified at Norroy-les-Pont-à-Mousson in Eastern France (Gallia Belgica). This source rock was also identified in many mid-first-century A.D. army tombstones along the Rhineland frontier. More specifically, its identification at the pre-conquest base of Legion XX (and Facilis) at Neuss establishes a petrological connection between southern Britannia and the Rhineland, probably before A.D. 49. Another characteristic was its restricted early use, specifically, perhaps, linked with the development of the Claudian fortress. Instead of quarrying what became the more accessible native freestone outcrop of the Middle Jurassic between Dorset and Humberside, this initial phase of Colchester's development relied upon the import of established continental materials.

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I am grateful to Mr Philip Wise from the Castle Museum, Colchester and to Dr Carl Pause at the Clemens-Sels-Museum at Neuss for allowing me access to sample the tombstones described in this text;

⁴¹ Phillips 1975, 102.

⁴² A regional petrological study of first-century A.D. tombstones and monumental architecture from southern Britannia has only identified this lithology at Colchester. It is worth noting that the tombstone of Longinus, believed to be approximately contemporary with Facilis, is of a British mid-Jurassic source (Hayward forthcoming).

⁴³ Bedon, *op. cit.* (note 21), fig. 14.

⁴⁴ Selzer 1988, 155.

⁴⁵ Stribny, *op. cit.* (note 33), pl. 6.

⁴⁶ Frere, *op. cit.* (note 40), 48.

⁴⁷ Bedon, *op. cit.* (note 31), fig. 14.

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VILBIAM (RIB 154): Kidnap or Robbery? Paul Russell writes: The earliest curse tablet to come to light at Bath presents one of the more difficult problems of interpretation. In 1880 a tablet was found inscribed with text the first line of which reads JUQIHIMMAIBLIVTIVALO[. It runs from left to right in correct word sequence but the order of letters in each word is reversed. Restoring the text produces an unproblematic line of Latin QU[I] MIHI VILBIAM [INV] OLAVIT, parallel in structure to numerous other curse tablets at Bath and elsewhere. It follows the usual pattern involving a phrase along the lines of 'whoever has stolen — from me', and goes on to invoke the help of the goddess in punishing them and provides what seems to be a list of suspects. The stolen object is typically the kind of thing one would expect to find in the changing-room of a bath-house — coins, clothes, etc. The one instance of a ploughshare (an unlikely object in a bath-house) presumably shows that the aggrieved victims could call on the goddess to extend her powers to the inhabitants of the neighbouring countryside.⁴⁸ This tablet presents a problem in this respect: we would expect *vilbiam* to refer to an object which has been stolen from the baths but hitherto no convincing suggestion has emerged. In the original edition of the tablet in the *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, it is suggested that *VILBIAM* is a personal name.⁴⁹ Tomlin, in his edition of the curse-tablets from Bath, expresses not unreasonable unease about this: 'it is difficult to follow *RIB* in understanding it as a personal name, not just because it is unattested ... , but

⁴⁸ Tomlin 1988, II, 148–9 (*Tab. Sulis* 31). I am grateful to Roger Tomlin and Jim Adams for comments on a draft of this note.

⁴⁹ Collingwood and Wright 1965, 49 (*RIB* 154).