A quarter of a century ago it was the normal practice of historians to attribute the annexation of north-west England without question to Gnaeus Julius Agricola, governor of Britain between A.D. 77 and 83. This was in effect a ringing endorsement of the art of the ‘spin doctor’; for Tacitus, Agricola’s son-in-law and biographer, successfully omitted or relegated into the background evidence which would have supported the propositions that the process of annexation was more cumulative and gradual and that others, besides Agricola, made significant contributions to it. Further, in his *Histories* (published c. A.D. 106), Tacitus presented as fact the suggestion that, after Agricola’s recall from Britain (which, in the *Life of Agricola*, he had indicated as an extremely devious and unreasonable act), Roman activities in Britain represented, at best, a lost opportunity and, at worst, a sell-out.¹ It is the purpose of the present paper to re-examine these views in the light of the greater body of evidence that is now available to us; whilst it will concentrate on the area of north-west England, this will, where appropriate, be related to the wider context of northern Britain.

Since the late 1960s, archaeologists and historians have come increasingly to question older propositions, subjecting

them to the evidence resulting from new programmes of survey and excavation, and from greater refinement in handling the artefactual material. Consequently, we can now appreciate that the annexation of the north-west not only pre-dated Agricola’s governorship, but also in some aspects the Flavian period (A.D. 69–96) altogether; from this we can see that both the nature and geography of annexation require re-examination. It has also become clear that the circumstances of Agricola’s recall in A.D. 83 were not essentially negative, but represented a change of policy which was in fact pursued in a positive manner.

North-west England was part of the territory of the Brigantes, a tribe described by Tacitus as the ‘most populous’ in Britain—an observation largely ignored by those who for decades insisted on the tribe’s scant population. Recent studies have served to correct this (and incidentally to vindicate Tacitus’ assertion), and we have become increasingly aware of the number of Roman forts which were constructed on land that had already been cleared for cultivation. It is evident that the Brigantes—the tribal name probably means ‘upland people’—were engaged in both agriculture and ‘heavier’ industry, and were ruled probably by people who were intruders from further south.

The physical geography of Brigantian territory suggests that political arrangements may have been quite complex;


Tacitus refers to a single leader, ‘Queen’ Cartimandua, although it is evident from the clustering of hill-forts (oppida) that more localized centres of power existed. Further, documentary evidence of the Roman period provides us with other tribal names apparently located within what is broadly described as Brigantian territory: the Carvetii, who later acquired a level of self-administration, held land in the Eden valley and the Solway plain, whilst the Setantii, who are mentioned in Ptolemy’s *Geographia*, probably lived around Morecambe Bay, although the Lancashire Fylde has also been suggested as a location for them. Ptolemy also mentions the Gabrantovices (evidently a coastal group), whilst the Corionototae and the Tectoverdi may have had land around the centre and east of Hadrian’s Wall. Further, it has long been known that the Parisi, a tribe having cultural affinities with the Iceni and the Coritani, occupied territory on the east coast of Yorkshire. Nor is it likely that this list of Brigantian ‘sub-groups’ is in any way complete. To the south-west of the region, the territory of the Brigantes bordered upon that of the Cornovii.

It seems likely, therefore, that whilst the tribe of the Brigantes may have had a ‘paramount monarch’, the territory ascribed to it was run on a day-to-day basis by a number of semi-autonomous local hierarchies. The location of Cartimandua’s seat of power has often been sought, but it makes sense, with Richmond, to relate it to the area’s chief economic strength—the good agricultural land of the Vale of York. This suggests that her centre was probably the oppidum at Stanwick, on the eastern approach to Stainmore, and helps

5 Higham, *Northern counties*, p. 146.
to explain the significance of York as the choice for the site of the main legionary base in the area and (later) of Aldborough for the Romanized civitas-centre.

Such political arrangements also serve to emphasize the importance to Cartimandua of her treaty relationship with Rome, which may have been cemented as early as the invasion year of A.D. 43, particularly since such arrangements with local tribal leaders appear to have had a significant place in the imperial philosophy of the Emperor Claudius. From the Romans’ point of view, this treaty will have been intended to secure quiescence on the northern flank of their conquest of the midlands and Wales, whilst Roman support immeasurably strengthened Cartimandua’s hand in the factional politics of the Brigantes and their sub-groups. Her marriage to the warlord Venutius probably represented an attempt to keep the lid on tribal factionalism and, from Venutius’ point of view, a recognition of Cartimandua’s new strength. None the less, the Brigantian potential for disruption was clearly exposed in A.D. 49–50\(^1\) by a rising of tribesmen which distracted Ostorius Scapula from pursuing the conquest of Wales, and which may have been connected with Roman activities in the Welsh border areas.\(^1\) The reality of the strength of the queen’s pro-Roman stance was clearly demonstrated when, in A.D. 51, she handed over to Rome their principal (and highly elusive) adversary, the Catuvellaunian leader Caratacus (Caradoc), when he sought sanctuary with her.\(^2\)

The course of relations between Rome and the Brigantes through the 50s and 60s cannot be reconstructed in any detail, because Tacitus’ references are vague in terms of both chronology and location.\(^3\) However, prior to the final denouement in A.D. 69, there appear to have been occasions

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11 See, for example, Rhyn Park in *Britannia*, IX (1978), p. 436.
on which the friction between the Brigantian leaders became sufficiently serious to warrant Roman military intervention. On one of these occasions, Venutius is said to have introduced allies from outside the tribal area; although it is possible that Venutius may have had connections in southern Scotland, it is usually reckoned that the source of the allies mentioned by Tacitus was north Wales; this would point to the likelihood that Venutius’ seat of power lay in the south and south-west of the tribal territory.

As yet, evidence is extremely limited as to the nature and extent of this early Roman intervention. However, it may be that a key type of artefactual evidence lies in the distribution of local and near-contemporary copies of the copper coinage of the Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41–54) (Fig. 1, p. 6).¹⁴ These appear to have enjoyed a currency in the later years of Claudius’ reign and in Nero’s (A.D. 54–68), but not to have survived in circulation into Flavian times. Their absence from deposits that are exclusively Flavian (or later) points to the reasonable contention that they may be regarded as diagnostic of pre-Flavian activity.

Evidence of permanent Roman occupation of sites in western Brigantia during this period remains equivocal, though the coin evidence from Little Chester (Derb.) suggests some northward movement in the southern Pennines.¹⁵ Again, in the north-west of the area (that is, in the territory now ascribed to the Carvetii), a number of sites have produced some evidence which may be thought consistent with Roman activity at this early period—Papcastle, Blennerhasset, and Cummersdale (all Cumb.)—apparently supporting the hypothesis that a line was drawn along the southern flank of the Solway plain in the direction of Maryport, presumably to separate (and protect?) the Carvetii from their southern

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Figure 1 Find-spots of pre-Neronian aes coins
neighbours. It is possible that some other Roman sites, such as Walton-le-Dale and Lancaster, which have produced some early copper coinage, may also prove to have had pre-Flavian phases; although it does not appear that these have been located in areas which have been excavated, early sites may in some cases await discovery, lying adjacent to later developments.

In general, the distribution of characteristically early coinage is consistent on the Roman side with ‘search-and-destroy’ missions, where structural evidence would have consisted of campaign camps, which have in most cases been lost due to subsequent agricultural activity. The principal distributions of early coins in north Cheshire, Lancashire, and southern Cumbria are in coastal and river-valley locations. It is possible, therefore, that western Brigantia was penetrated along the valleys of the Mersey, Ribble, Lune, and Kent rivers, and from the coast of southern Cumbria, especially the Cartmel and Furness peninsulas. Troops may indeed in part have been transported by coastal shipping, perhaps from the Dee estuary, though it should be noted that evidence for the nature and chronology of a pre-Flavian (and pre-fortress) phase at Chester remains equivocal (see below). The chief land bases for such operations as are suggested would have been situated further south—that is, at sites closer to the Fosse Way.

In the main, therefore, the purpose of such missions was not to establish permanent occupation in the north-west at that early stage, but to secure the restabilizing of Brigantian politics in support of Cartimandua. Nor can the dating of them be securely fixed, but there may have been a need for constant surveillance of the western Brigantes after the events of A.D. 49-50. Venutius’ disruptive activities evidently came to a head in A.D. 68-9, when the Roman army and its leaders were distracted by the exigencies of civil war during the ‘year of the four emperors’. At some stage prior to this, Cartimandua had tried to

marginalize Venutius by divorcing him and marrying his armour-bearer in his place. In the ensuing confusion, Roman troops had to intervene to rescue Cartimandua, and the Roman poet Papinius Statius writes of battles in which a son of the then governor of the province, Vettius Bolanus (A.D. 69–71), distinguished himself. Cartimandua’s defeat presumably meant that her stronghold at Stanwick fell to Venutius, and became the centre of the tribe’s resistance to Rome. The status quo was at an end; as Tacitus put it, ‘Venutius got a kingdom, whilst we were left with a war.’ The time had now come for the annexation of Brigantian territory to the province.

It is evident that the Emperor Vespasian (A.D. 69–79), who emerged as the ultimate victor in the civil war, saw this as a major priority; in A.D. 71, he sent as the new governor of the province his son-in-law Quintus Petillius Cerialis Caesius Rufus, fresh from his quelling of the dangerous Gallo-German rebellion of A.D. 69–70; it was plainly a high-grade appointment. Tacitus, however, does not provide a great deal of information about this period; perhaps he did not wish to allow an extensive account of Cerialis’ activities to overshadow those of Agricola (as governor) later in the decade. Further, it is possible that Tacitus (and Agricola) nursed a grudge against a man who, as brother-in-law of the Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81–96), and (probably) as consul in A.D. 83, may have had a considerable hand in Agricola’s recall from Britain in that year.

Tacitus’ rather imprecise description suggests that in the early 70s the Brigantes were tackled by means of parallel advances east and west of the Pennines. Cerialis himself, in view of his previous familiarity with legion IX Hispana and its base at Lincoln, presumably headed the eastern advance; this would have been appropriate, too, in view of the fact that a battle in the vicinity of Stanwick was likely to prove a crucial event in the campaign. It is likely that his troops went

18 For recent work at Stanwick, see *Britannia*, XIII (1982), p. 348; XXI (1990), p. 325.
north-eastwards to separate the coastal Parisi from the Brigantes, and northwards towards Stainmore and Corbridge (Northumb.). A new legionary fortress was established at this time at York, and linked by westward routes, through Newton Kyme (Yorks. W.R.) to the Ribble, and to Cheshire through Castleshaw (Yorks. W.R.).

The western advance was evidently entrusted to Agricola, at this time commander (legatus) of legion XX Valeria Victrix whose main base was probably located at Wroxeter (Salop); Agricola is on record as having played a key role in securing his legion’s allegiance to the new reigning dynasty. Tacitus provides no clues to Agricola’s route(s) in A.D. 71; again, however, the evidence of coin loss may help us to make some progress.

It has long been assumed that Agricola used an already existing auxiliary fort at Chester as a forward base, and proceeded north through Northwich, Manchester, Ribchester, and thence along the Lune and Eden valleys to Carlisle. This model, however, presents difficulties for the resolution of which the nature of development at Chester is a crucial factor. Excavation at the Abbey Green site in the 1970s revealed beneath the fortress phase evidence of a ‘box rampart’, which (it was argued) might have been in use for some time. Such ramparts are not thought to have been used beyond the very

beginning of the Flavian period, and recall similar structures recognized at Rhyn Park (near Oswestry, Salop.) and at other sites in the border areas of Wales.\textsuperscript{25} Since Chester has produced evidence of Neronian pottery, it would seem reasonable to suppose that an early fort at Chester either relates to the campaigns of Suetonius Paullinus,\textsuperscript{26} or was introduced subsequent to that in Nero’s later years; the intention may have been for such a fort to act as the northern end of a ‘Welsh \textit{limes}’ to check Welsh leaders who may have wished to aid Venutius or to emulate Caratacus’ attempt to seek sanctuary with the Brigantes. Either of these possibilities must have been matters of real anxiety, if (as suggested above) Venutius had had allies in the region.

The date of establishment of such a site and its length of service must, therefore, remain uncertain—and particularly the question of whether or not there was a break in occupation before the commencement of work on the fortress phase in the mid-70s. It has to be said, however, that the coin evidence both from the Abbey Green site itself and from Chester as a whole (in excess of 1,700 coins) does not readily lend support to the proposition of a lengthy period of pre-Flavian activity. Indeed, the observation that the road from Whitchurch to Chester was a secondary development of a line from Whitchurch to Farndon and Holt both supports this and points to the likelihood that Chester’s pre-fortress establishment came late in the Neronian period.\textsuperscript{27} Further, the coin evidence from Farndon and Holt, taken from a purely statistical point of view, appears to offer a stronger case for a pre-Flavian presence than does Chester.\textsuperscript{28}

In a geographical sense, Chester does not occupy an obvious place in a scheme to annexe north-west England

\textsuperscript{25} Britannia, IX (1978), p. 436.
\textsuperscript{27} Britannia, XI (1980), p. 365.
overland, although as a base for coastal shipping it could have assumed a sharper relevance. In terms of land routes, the site looks more directly towards north Wales; the construction of the legionary fortress would have made more sense once Brigantian territory was regarded as conquered—that is, after the campaigning of the early 70s. Not only does Chester itself not fit comfortably with the conquest of the north-west, but of the other sites on the northward route from Chester neither Northwich nor Manchester has provided any convincing evidence of activity earlier than Agricola’s governorship; only Ribchester has produced coin evidence and other chronological pointers which are consistent with establishment as early as the governorship of Petillius Cerialis.

An alternative—and more convincing—model of annexation in the early 70s is provided by postulating the use of bases in the north-west midlands, such as Chesterton, Little Chester, Wroxeter, and Whitchurch (Fig. 2, p. 12). The main route of advance probably followed the line of ‘King Street’, through Middlewich, crossing the Mersey perhaps a little upstream of the later industrial site at Wilderspool, and the Ribble at Walton-le-Dale, where the coin evidence appears to take the early phase of occupation just into the early years of the Flavian period, but not convincingly beyond. From there, the route ran to Lancaster and then followed the lines of the Lune and Eden rivers to Carlisle (Fig. 3, p. 13). Thus, we have a route which is consistent with the dating evidence derived from the bulk of the sites situated along it. At the same time, however, we should remain open to the possibility that other routes and sites relating to initial annexation await identification.

In addition, it is reasonable to suppose that coastal shipping, perhaps setting out from the Dee, was used to

32 Shotter, ‘Coin-loss’.
Figure 2 *Military thrusts of the early 70s*

dismark troops on river estuaries to work in concert with their colleagues who had proceeded overland—much as Tacitus describes in his account of Agricola's later campaigns in northern Scotland in the early 80s.\(^{33}\) Thus, sites established at river crossings could be supplied and reinforced by sea, creating a powerful (and demoralizing) impression of the ubiquity of Roman troops. Such an intention may have lain behind the development of Kirkham, on the north bank of the Ribble estuary.\(^{34}\) The sequence for this site was finally established in 1994 in a substantial area-excavation of the last available part of the site at Dowbridge. Although dating evidence was thinner than might have been hoped, it is clear that the first use of the site took the form of a campaign camp, which was soon succeeded by a watchtower. In its turn, this was followed by an auxiliary fort—possibly after the

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Figure 3 Northward advance during the governorship of Petillius Cerialis
evacuation of Scotland in the later 80s—which was operational into the middle of the second century. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the earliest of these sites related to the activities in which Agricola was involved during the governorship of Cerialis.

The considerable extent of this period of campaigning is suggested by Tacitus, when he writes that ‘the greater part of Brigantian territory was either conquered or fought over’; archaeological evidence confirms what Tacitus says about the extent, for we have not only the indications of Cerialis’ work east of the Pennines (perhaps as far north as Corbridge), but also dates acquired from dendrochronology for sites as far apart as Ribchester and Carlisle, which put them both firmly into this period of campaigning.35 It is likely that Cerialis’ and Agricola’s troops met at the western end of Stainmore—the route which Cerialis presumably took after victory at Stanwick, with the camps at Rey Cross (Yorks. N.R.) and Crackenthorpe (Westmld) marking his line of march—and together made for Carlisle, where a new fort superseded that at Cummersdale.36 Just as Cerialis had secured the policing and protection of the Parisi east of the Pennines, so this campaigning will have effected similar results for the Carvetii in north-west Cumbria.

Thus, the campaigns associated with Cerialis’ governorship will, as Tacitus indicates, have reduced the Brigantes to a sufficient degree of order for Julius Frontinus to be able to turn his attention back to Wales, probably, as we have seen, commencing work on the legionary fortress at Chester; we should not, however, rule out the possibility that Frontinus also developed further the control of Brigantian territory.37

In A.D. 77, late in the campaigning season, Agricola arrived back in Britain as the new governor; his orders from Vespasian must have been to carry the conquest to its logical

35 Tacitus, *Life of Agricola*, 17.1; McCarthy, *Carlisle*, p. 3; A. C. H. Olivier, personal comment (Ribchester).
37 Hanson, *Agricola*, p. 62.
A swift—and unexpected—campaign at the tail-end of A.D. 77 finally reduced the Ordovices of north Wales, leaving the new governor free to turn his attention northwards. Tacitus also makes it clear that, in contrast to Suetonius Paullinus twenty years previously, Agricola did not make the mistake of neglecting the non-military aspects of his post; he checked abuses in the tax system and encouraged the development of units of civil administration (civitates peregrinae). Although Tacitus does not describe this in any specific way, we may reasonably assume that areas of the north midlands and southern Cheshire (the tribal territory of the Cornovii), which were now being vacated by the military, were in the early stages of development into the civitas Cornoviorum. The need for Agricola’s regulation of abuse of the tax system is demonstrated by the fact that the forum and basilica at Wroxeter were not formally dedicated until the time of Hadrian in A.D. 128—and then only after further tax concessions. The easing of abuses encouraged a developing market economy, with farmers and manufacturers doing business with the Roman army. This will in its turn have encouraged the development and prosperity of vici outside the forts.

Agricola’s Brigantian campaign of A.D. 78 appears, according to Tacitus, to have continued the earlier policy of separating groups from each other, and operating according to the classic tactic of ‘divide-and-rule’; new east-west routes, such as those between Chester and York and between Carlisle and Corbridge (the Stanegate) played a part in this strategy. Although, as in Cerialis’ campaigns, Agricola’s largely ignored the Lake District, he did evidently open up a new northward route in the Pennine foothills, from Chester through Northwich, Manchester, and Ribchester, joining the earlier route at Burrow in Lonsdale (Fig. 4, p. 16). Tacitus’ reference to ‘estuaries and woods’, however, indicates that Agricola

39 R.I.B. 288; see also Pliny, Epp. X. 37–40 and Dio Cassius, LXII.2 (Hanson, Agricola, p. 80).
Figure 4 Agricola's campaign of A.D. 78
continued to operate on a broad front, and probably still combined overland marches with coastal landings. Tacitus indicates Agricola’s success in securing peace amongst ‘many states’ who accepted garrisons; it is likely that this refers to sub-groups amongst the Brigantes, and suggests that the placing and manning of forts in the territory must have been conceived in a very flexible fashion.

For example, as we have seen, the fort which we have assumed to have existed at Walton-le-Dale was probably abandoned, a watchtower was built overlooking the Ribble estuary at Kirkham, and the defences at Ribchester were remodelled, with (amongst other features) a ‘Punic’ ditch which evidently separated the fort from the developing vicus. The growth of Ribchester may in fact point to its role as a holding station in the hinterland of the front line. The question of supplying the army as it settled into occupation was obviously of great significance; the writing tablets from Vindolanda provide much information on the likely detail of this exercise. Further, the development of small industrial sites, such as those at Quernmore (Lancaster) and Scalesceugh (Carlisle), points to attention being given to developing the infrastructure. Further north, although none of the possible sites has as yet received extensive excavation, it seems likely that new forts were established at Burrow (Lancs.), Low Borrow Bridge, and Brougham (both Westmld).

The remainder of Agricola’s governorship—militarily, at least—was concerned with Scotland; it is evident, however, that Roman policy in Britain was at this stage being kept under review. The virtue of accepting the revised dating of Agricola’s tenure—that is, A.D. 77–83—lies in the relationship which it gives between imperial deaths and accessions (when one might reasonably expect policy reviews to have taken place) and significant stages in Agricola’s progress in Britain.

40 Tacitus, Life of Agricola, 20,2.
42 For Low Borrow Bridge, see J. Lambert, Transect through time (Lancaster, 1996), pp. 87–126.
Vespasian died in A.D. 79; Agricola had completed his third campaign, which took him beyond the line of the Forth and the Clyde. Titus' accession in A.D. 79 seems to have introduced a more cautious phase into imperial policy towards Britain; for the two campaigning seasons of Titus' short reign appear to have been taken up with marking time. There is a hint that Agricola would have liked to have been able to launch an invasion of Ireland, and more than a hint that consideration was being given to establishing a frontier (terminus) on the line of the Forth and Clyde. The background to the caution was evidently the consideration which was being given to a deteriorating situation in central Europe; indeed, in A.D. 80, detachments were sent from the British legions.

In A.D. 81, Titus died and was succeeded by his younger brother, Domitian, an emperor for whom Tacitus and many of his senatorial colleagues entertained little affection or respect. None the less, Domitian seems to have breathed some new life into the British conquest, although we may question the true nature of his intentions. Agricola's army proceeded northwards from starting points on the Forth and the Clyde, whilst the fleet carried troops up the east coast to effect rendezvous with their colleagues who had marched overland. There is little doubt from Tacitus' language that he (and presumably Agricola) interpreted this as the final push for total conquest. Further, there was in what happened an appearance of permanence—the protection and separation of the grain-growing coastal lowlands by means of the Gask Ridge limes, and the decision to establish a new legionary fortress at Inchtuthil (Perthshire), which must have assumed the long-term presence in Britain of four legions.

In effect, the ground covered by Agricola's sixth campaign was made permanent; but that of the seventh campaign of A.D. 83—from Stracathro (Forfarshire) northwards—was covered only by campaign camps (as far north as the Moray

We may assume that Domitian and Agricola will have concurred on the need to bring the Caledonians to battle; the programme of fortification and denial of access to good agricultural land were designed to induce desperation and thus force the issue. At the same time, it is possible that Domitian and his close advisers were looking at these events in another light. As has recently been argued in the case of the campaigns of Septimius Severus in northern Scotland in the early third century, the purpose of bringing the Caledonians to battle may have been akin to genocide—the deliberate destruction of a generation of fighting men; this would have brought quiescence in the north for two decades, and thus produced a breathing space in which policy options could be reviewed in the light of the contemporary situation across the empire.  

Agricola was withdrawn from Britain in A.D. 83 after his victory at Mons Graupius; Tacitus regarded the move as devious and sinister, but Agricola had already enjoyed a tenure of twice the length normal for the period. For Tacitus, this was the prelude to sell-out. The truth is, however, more complex: in the first place, Agricola’s withdrawal did not coincide precisely with an obvious change of policy; indeed, much of the construction of permanent sites north of the Forth and Clyde (including the fortress at Inchtuthil) was probably carried on—perhaps even initiated—by Agricola’s successor, whose identity is not known for certain.

In A.D. 87, it appears that a fresh policy decision was put into effect; legion II Adiutrix was withdrawn to the Continent, and its place had to be taken at Chester by XX Valeria Victrix (from Inchtuthil). The logic was inescapable: the whole of Britain could not be held with just three legions, and thus sacrifice of territory was inevitable. An effect, however—perhaps even a principal purpose—of the victory at Mons Graupius was that this could be managed without undue risk of harassment. Studies of coin loss at military sites in Scotland confirm that A.D. 87 was the year in which withdrawal took place.  

46 As suggested in British Archaeology, VI (July 1995).
Traditionally, it has been held that the withdrawal from Scotland was managed in two phases—first from northern Scotland, leaving the line of the Forth and the Clyde as the frontier of the province, and then, about a decade later and in circumstances which are unclear, a second phase taking the Roman front line back to the Stanegate and the line of the Tyne and the Solway. Recent studies of the Stanegate fortifications, however, reveal an alternative model: first, with the exception of a small number of sites in southern Scotland, the latest coins found at the majority (north and south) date to A.D. 87–91, suggesting that those years saw a general evacuation of Scotland, with only a small number of outliers, such as Newstead (Roxburghshire) and Dalswinton (Dumfries-shire), remaining north of the Stanegate. Inchtuthil was carefully abandoned, and it seems likely that at the same time Stanegate sites were being prepared to receive a large number of troops: forts of 7–8 acres, such as Corbridge, Newbrough, Chesterholm (Vindolanda), Carvoran, and Nether Denton, were capable of housing multiple garrisons. The Agricolan line from Corbridge to Carlisle was extended westwards through Burgh by Sands (‘Burgh I’) to the coast at Kirkbride (Fig. 5); this site, possibly ‘Briga’ of the Vindolanda documents, probably served as a depot, situated as it was on the bay known as Moricambe. Protection was offered against interference from across the Solway by enhancing the ‘western Stanegate’ with watchtowers (as at Farnhill and Easton, and in the pre-fort phase at ‘Burgh I’), and with a running ditch and palisade (as seen at Fingland Rigg). Eastwards, the Stanegate was extended to Whickham (Washing Well) and perhaps to South Shields on the Tyne estuary. Through the next three decades, the Stanegate system was enhanced by reducing the forts in size by approximately fifty per cent, and by introducing intermediate structures, such as fortlets and watchtowers.

48 Jones, ‘Emergence of Tyne–Solway frontier’.
Figure 5 Late Flavian/early Trajanic consolidation
In this way, the Stanegate was being developed in a manner recognizably similar to the contemporary *limes* on the Rhine.

The positive development of the Stanegate argues strongly against Tacitus' negative interpretation of events in the late 80s and beyond. There are other indications, too, of a positive approach: the Lake District, which had evidently been omitted during the initial conquest, was now subjected to forts and policing. Studies of pottery and coins indicate that the conquest and occupation of the Lake District spanned a period between c. A.D. 90 and 120; Watercrook (Kendal), Ambleside, Hardknott, and Ravenglass policed the southern Lakes, whilst Old Penrith, Troutbeck, Papcastile, and Maryport operated to the north; the coin evidence from most of these sites places their inception in the late Flavian and Trajanic periods. The line from Carlisle to Maryport was redrawn a little to the south of its original route, passing now through Old Carlisle (Red Dial). It is clear, too—for example, at Kirkham, Ribchester, and Lancaster, as well as at the legionary fortress at Chester—that existing sites often underwent complex redevelopments, such as rebuilding (in whole or part) in stone, enlargements in size, diminutions, reorientation, and in some cases changes of role. This again serves to indicate that Tacitus was not correct in describing this as a sell-out of Roman interests; he was misinterpreting, either through ignorance or malice, the moves that point to the necessary flexibility of the Roman authorities in operational decision-making.

Just as important was the development of the infrastructure; in the early days of conquest, individual sites were served by their own industrial facilities, as at Quernmore, Scalesceugh, Muncaster, and Brampton, and no doubt at other similar

50 Breeze and Dobson, ‘Roman military deployment’.
52 Shotter, ‘Coin-loss’.
sites still awaiting discovery. Such sites were not necessarily abandoned, but were certainly enhanced by further facilities. The *vici* developed outside the forts, as a wide variety of manufacturers and traders sought to position themselves closer to their markets; further, at the turn of the first and second centuries, the writing tablets from Vindolanda provide a picture of a developing economic and social relationship between fort and *vicus*, and between both of them and the farmers of the fort's hinterland. This suggests that the observation made by the historian Dio Cassius regarding the Germans—"they were becoming accustomed to hold markets and were meeting in peaceful assemblages... and were becoming different without knowing it"—is equally applicable to north-west England. Thus, production and wealth will have been stimulated, and although only a handful of villa estates have been recognized in the north-west—for example, at Eaton by Tarporley (Ches.) and Gargrave (Yorks. W.R.)—we can assume that wealth was being generated; how else could the *civitates* of the Cornovii and the Brigantes have come to be established in the second century, and that of the Carvetii in the third?

The army needed supplies, and made it a priority to create the organization necessary to secure them; it is clear, for example, that the *vicus* at Manchester saw industrial activity concentrated into a particular area (in an 'industrial estate'); there is some evidence to suggest that similar arrangements were also made at other such sites—for example, at Ribchester, Lancaster, and Watercrook. The salt industry developed at a number of sites in Cheshire: Nantwich, Middlewich, and Northwich have all produced evidence of it. A variety of raw materials will have been exploited to supply the developing industries. But the most impressive indication of the ability of the Roman army to harness local talent is to be seen in the creation and organization of

55 Dio Cassius, LI.18.2.
dedicated industrial sites, as at Holt (Denb.), Heronbridge (Ches.), and Wilderspool.

At Wilderspool, a wide variety of industrial processes has been recognized on a site which appears to have operated at its greatest capacity from the late first century to the early third. That those involved in manufacturing were of local origin seems clear from the nature of the structural evidence on the site; it is also possible that the so-called ‘trade-mark’ type of potter’s stamp may, like the legends on many locally-copied coins, have represented blundered attempts on the part of illiterate men to reproduce marks which they had seen. Presumably, the success of a site such as Wilderspool depended upon local traders being persuaded that their best economic interests were served by moving into the close proximity of their markets. Products from Wilderspool have been recognized as far afield as the Antonine Wall in Scotland. It is possible that a similar type of site was established at Wigan, although much less is known about it. Again, all such sites presuppose a developing exploitation of the region’s raw materials.

That the production from such sites was directed towards the needs of the Roman army seems clear not just from the distribution of the products themselves, but also from the establishment at Walton-le-Dale late in the first century of a depot, presumably to distribute a variety of supplies around the region. That this was under direct military operation seems certain, in view of the tight regularity of the large shed-like structures which characterized the site.

A problem throughout this discussion has been the lack of clear documentation from literary evidence and from an inadequate collection of epigraphic information. The structural evidence from Stanegate sites suggests flexibility in

58 J. Hinchliffe and J. H. Williams, Roman Warrington (Manchester, 1992).
61 Jones, Roman Manchester, pp. 153 ff.
the use of military units and, on a localized level, the strength reports among the Vindolanda tablets appear to confirm this.\textsuperscript{63} It is unclear how far (if at all) British units were further depleted by the demands of Trajan’s Dacian wars in the first years of the second century and his eastern campaigns (c. A.D. 114–17); it does, however, seem certain from a statement in the \textit{Life of Hadrian}\textsuperscript{64} in the \textit{Scriptores historiae Augustae} that when

\textsuperscript{63} Birley, Birley, and Birley, \textit{Vindolanda, II}, pp. 18 ff.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Life of Hadrian}, 5,2.
Hadrian succeeded Trajan in A.D. 117, the military situation in Britain was far from composed, and required immediate action by the governor, Quintus Pompeius Falco, to bring it under control.\textsuperscript{65} In the medium term, it needed a visit to Britain by the emperor himself to conduct on the spot what was in effect a wide-ranging policy review—the outcome of this was radical and of great significance, though in a sense it represented a logical and vigorous prosecution of policies that had been pursued since the 80s.

Thus, between the 60s and 120s, northern Britain had been annexed, stabilized, and set on the path of Romanization (Fig. 6); in the main, local people had come to appreciate what was to be gained by co-operation. With this in mind, we cannot accept Tacitus' assessment of these events as total conquest, followed by a sell-out. Nor do they confirm the fear, expressed by the Caledonian chieftain before Mons Graupius, that 'they create a desolation, and call it peace'.\textsuperscript{66} At the end of the day, Roman activities in northern Britain, and in north-west England in particular, echo the description of Roman military aims adumbrated by Virgil in his epic poem, the *Aeneid*—'to war down the proud, and proffer the olive branch to those who submit'.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{65} As is shown by the evidence of contemporary coinage: *The Roman imperial coinage*, ed. H. Mattingly, E. A. Sydenham, and C. H. V. Sutherland, coinage of Hadrian 577.

\textsuperscript{66} *Life of Agricola*, 30,5.

\textsuperscript{67} Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI.853.