Roman Tile Stamps from Lincoln (Lindum) and the Legio V Alaudae

By J. E. BOGAERS

In Lincolnshire History and Archaeology i (1966), 29–32 Mr M. Todd published an article entitled ‘Roman Stamped Tiles from Lincoln and their Origin’. It deals with a good forty stamped tiles which were found in the area of the colonia Lindum or in its immediate vicinity, mostly in the primary walling of a bath-building of the original colonia. The stamps consist of four letters in relief, LVL followed by an A, D, E or F, within a plain, oblong cartouche. On several stamps the letters are separated by very faint traces of stops.

In Todd’s opinion the Lincoln tiles are products of the legio quinta Alaudae dating from the years before A.D. 69/70, when this legion was stationed in the fortress at Vetera (1) in Lower Germany, on the Fürstenberg at Xanten. On closer investigation of Todd’s arguments it appears that there is no reason for identifying the Lincoln stamps with those of Legion V in Germania Inferior.

1. D. F. Petch interpreted the tiles as the products of a civilian concern. The letters LVL would be an abbreviation of the tria nomina of a private manufacturer; the A, D, E and F would ‘indicate either the kiln of origin or alternatively the different batches of tiles from one kiln’. Todd, however, thinks that this would be ‘unusually early for civil manufacture of tiles on this scale in the north-western provinces: other large private firms seem to be phenomena of the late third and fourth centuries and, north of the Alps, there is nothing of certainly civil origin on the scale of the Lincoln stamps in the first and second centuries’. One may be allowed to disagree with this conclusion. If the Lincoln tiles date, as is supposed, from the initial stage of the colonia, towards the end of Domitian’s reign or not long afterwards, it is difficult to see why a civilian concern could not have manufactured tiles for the large building-programme which the foundation called for. Generally speaking the dating of private tile stamps is still highly problematical. It would not be surprising in Gaul or

1 See also CIL vii 1251 and p. 50; JRS xlviii (1958), 153 f., Nos. 27–8; D. E. Petch, Arch. Journ. cxvii (1960), 67, figs. 9, 7, and 68, No. 9; J. S. Wacher, The Towns of Roman Britain (London 1975), 431, n. 90; Britannia vi (1975), 287, No. 13; Britannia vii (1976), 388, No. 47 with n. 62.

2 Petch, op. cit. (note 1), 68, No. 9.

3 Cf. Wacher, op. cit. (note 1), 120.

4 Cf. CIL xiii/6, pp. 141 ff.; J. B. Keune, Trierer Zeitschr. 10 (1935), 60 ff.; A. Grenier, Manuel d’archéologie gallo-romaine, iii, 1 (Paris 1958), 78 ff.; Y. Graff, Romana contact 8 (1968), Nos.
Germany to find that private firms were already active in the Flavian period, and to all appearance they were not exceptional phenomena from the second century onwards.

2. Mr Todd continues: ‘ Secondly an abbreviation of the tria nomina of a private manufacturer to the three letters L V L, on which this hypothesis [of Petch] rests, is unparalleled and un-Roman’. Here Homer is nodding. One has only to look at the many stamps of civilian tile concerns in CIL xiii/6, e.g. LCS, MLB, QSS, SCM, SNS (cf., especially, No. 12801: GLSP, which – on account of CIL xiii 6458 – has to be expanded to Gaius Longinius Speratus; Nos. 12881–8: MVS = Marcus Valerius San——), numerous amphora-stamps (see M. H. Callender, Roman Amphorae with Index of Stamps (London, etc., 1965), especially p. xxvi); CIL xiii, 8717 b (Nijmegen): 1–O–M / M·V·H / V·S·LMM/(M·V·H might be Marcus Valerius Honoratus or Marcus Ulpius Heracles (as to the second possibility cf. CIL xiii 10021, 199 and 200, from Nijmegen)).

3. Mr Todd writes: ‘ There is a strong general similarity between the Xanten stamps [of Legion V Alaudae] and the Lincoln group, notably in letter-forms, and more striking still two of the stamp-forms from Lincoln are exactly paralleled at Xanten, viz. L V L A and L V L F’. The parallels cited are not in fact exact.

(a) Lincoln: L V L A, Todd, p. 32, pl. b: letters in relief within a plain oblong cartouche; A without horizontal bar?; no superscript bar above the v; no clear traces of stops between the letters.

Xanten: L V L A, CIL xiii/6, pp. 14 f., type 25 γ: letters in relief within a tabula ansata; superscript bar above the v to mark it as a numeral. Cf. CIL xiii/6 12147, 32 (Fürstenberg, Vetera) and 12151, 2 (originis incertae); P. and J. Steiner, Bonner Jahrb. 110 (1903), 106, 10 and Taf. vi, 201 = P. Steiner, Xanten, Kataloge West- und Süddeutscher Altertumssammlungen i (Frankfurt a. M. 1911), 50, 11 and Taf. xxiv, 11.

(b) Lincoln: L V L F, according to Todd, p. 29, with letters in relief within a plain cartouche (not illustrated).

Xanten: L V L F (and L V L F), CIL xiii/6, pp. 14 f., types 18, ξ⁴ and ξ⁵: letters in relief within a tabula ansata. Cf. CIL xiii/6 12147 (Fürstenberg, Vetera), 24 (type 18, of which the cartouche is not θ, but a tabula ansata; see J. Hagen, Bonner Jahrb. 119 (1910), 297, 117 [L V L F]), 25 (type 18, ξ⁴, puncta; see J. Hagen, Bonner Jahrb. 122 (1912–13), 389, fig. 3, 3 [L V L F] and 390, 5) and 26 (type 18, ξ⁵, puncta; see P. Steiner, Xanten, 51, 12 [L V L F] and Taf. xxiv, 12 [L V L F], and J. Hagen, Bonner Jahrb. 124 (1917), 164, 11 and Taf. xxvii, 6 [L·V·L·F]).


1 O. Paret, Germania 10 (1926), 67 ff.
'In recent years a large number of hitherto unrecorded tile-stamps of the fifth and fifteenth legions have been found [at Xanten] and publication of this material may double the total number of stamps.' Here Todd must be referring particularly to the many tile stamps recently excavated in the Colonia Ulpia Traiana.

Frau Dr D. Haupt (Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn), who is studying the small finds from the C.V.T. at Xanten, has discussed the question with me and tells me that she has not seen a tile stamp of Legion V Alaudae which is identical with one of the Lincoln stamps, and so she cannot believe Mr Todd is right. There is no question of exact parallels between the Lincoln and Xanten tile stamps, at least with regard to the dies. At best there is only an apparent similarity in the texts of some stamps. This applies not only to the legends LVLA and LVLF, but perhaps also to LVLE. The Rheinische Landesmuseum, Bonn, has a unique tile stamp from Vetera (inv. No. 34, 57), which was found after the publication of CIL xiii/6: L·V·LF, letters in relief - with a superscript bar above the V - within an oblong cartouche in relief. Stamps reading LVLD are not known from Xanten. As far as can be gathered from Todd's article the forms of the Lincoln tile stamps as a whole are quite uncharacteristic of Legion V Alaudae. At the present time there is no tile stamp from Germania Inferior which bears more than a very generalized similarity to the Lincoln stamps.

In accounting for the Lincoln tiles Mr Todd's hypothesis - that a surplus of tiles was shipped as building material from Germany to Britain, or that tiles from Xanten were used as ballast in ships coming to Britain and thus arrived, more or less accidentally, at Lincoln - is to be rejected. A preferable explanation was proposed by Aem. Hübner, who in his discussion of CIL vii 121 wrote (ibid., p. 50): '(tegula) quae enim ibi (= Lincoln) invent a est inscript a sic LVLF, ea nomen hominis alicuius privati refert, ad legionem vero quintam (ut voluerunt antiquarii nonnulli Britanni) non pertinet'.

Assuming that the tile stamps from Lincoln really belong to a private tilery, then they may be compared to similar stamps found in Gloucestershire: TPF, TPFA, TPFB, TPFP. After a likely abbreviation of the tria nomina of the owner of the tilery the letters A, B, C and P - just as the corresponding letters A, D, E and F of the Lincoln tiles - might refer to a special kiln or to a part of the production of the kiln, or - most probably - they could be an abbreviation of the cognomen of a person who, in the service of the owner, was responsible for a part of the production of the tilery in question.

In connection with the last possibility attention must be drawn again to the tile stamps of Legion V Alaudae from Lower Germany. These stamps often consist of two letters, L(egionis)v, followed by one or two letters, or by an unmistakable (abbreviation of a praenomen and a) nomen gentilicium or a(n abbreviated) cognomen. These names doubtless relate to officers or soldiers
who were responsible for a part of the production of tiles. By a comparison of the Xanten stamps LVL/LVLA and LVLF/LVLF with other corresponding tile stamps from Xanten which bear a more expanded legend, it may be supposed that LA and LF mean respectively LA(etus or -eti) and L(aetus) F(ecit). The fourth, variable letter of the Lincoln and Gloucestershire stamps can very well be an abbreviation of the cognomen of a person in service of a civilian tilery; it is neither necessary nor desirable to imagine an alphabetical sequence.

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POSTSCRIPT

After this article had been completed Mr A. J. White, Keeper of Archaeology, City and County Museum, Lincoln, and Mr M. J. Jones, Deputy Director of Excavations of the Lincoln Archaeological Trust, kindly sent me, by request of Professor S. S. Frere, drawings and squeezes of tile stamps from Roman Lincoln found (a) at Cottesford Place 1975 (JRS xlviii (1958), 153 f., No. 27) and (b) at Broadgate 1973 (Britannia vi (1975), 287, No. 13). These confirmed my opinion that there is no reason for identifying the Lincoln stamps with those of legion V Alaudae in Lower Germany.

Cf. CIL xiii/6, pp. 14 f., Nos. 10, 18, 24, 25 and 51.

The writer wishes to thank Professor S. S. Frere for improving the translation of this article.