

MOREED ARBABZADAH – NICHOLAS ZAIR

NOTES ON A BRITISH CURSE TABLET FROM RED HILL, RATCLIFFE-ON-SOAR
(NOTTINGHAMSHIRE)

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 212 (2019) 172–179

© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn

NOTES ON A BRITISH CURSE TABLET FROM RED HILL, RATCLIFFE-ON-SOAR
(NOTTINGHAMSHIRE)*

In 1993 Hassall and Tomlin published a Latin curse tablet that was found at the Romano-British site of Red Hill in 1990.¹ More recently it has been discussed in Mullen 2013 and Adams 2016. Below are the text and translation printed by Adams,² but with a few minor alterations: firstly, we have added the missing <M> in (line 3) *samguin*, which is what appears on the actual tablet, as noted by Hassall and Tomlin 1993 and as shown in Tomlin's drawing; secondly, we have replaced the angle brackets around (line 6) <moriat> with curved brackets { }, in accordance with the Leiden conventions.

Text:

- 1 nomine Camulorigi et Titocune molam quam perdederunt
 in fanum dei deūouī. ꝥuicumꝥe nūm[e]n inuolasit
 mola illam ut samguin suum mīttat usque diem quō
 moriatur. q[ui]ꝥumꝥe iꝥuo[l]a[sit] hurta moriatur,
5 et paulatoriam quicumꝥe [illam] inuolasit
 et ipse {moriat} mo[ri]atur. quicumꝥi illam
 inuolasit et VERTOGN de ospitio uel uissacio,
 quicumꝥe illam inuolasit, a deuo moriatur.

Translation:

‘In the name of Camulorix and Titocuna I have dedicated in the temple of the god the mule which they have lost. Whichever person stole that mule, may he lose his own blood until the day he die. Whoever stole the hurdle (?), may he die; and the fodder-basket, whoever stole it, may he die also. Whoever stole it and the (VERTOGN) from the stable, or the double bag,³ whoever stole it, may he die by the god.’

The text is apparently concerned with the theft of a mule and other items. The tablet is difficult to date, but Mullen tentatively notes the possibility of assigning it to the 3rd or 4th century AD.⁴ This is based on the date of similar curse tablets found in Britain and on an uninscribed sheet of lead found at Ratcliffe-on-Soar with a coin from the second half of the fourth century (367/375). Such a date accords well with the 2007 investigation of the Red Hill Marina site, an area directly south of Red Hill, which suggested that Roman occupation of the area was at its peak in the 3rd and 4th centuries.⁵

(i) (line 2) *in fanum dei*

Hassall and Tomlin render (lines 1–2) *molam ... in fanum dei deūouī* as ‘I have dedicated in the temple of the god the mule ...’. The translation of *in fanum dei* as ‘in the temple of the god’ then appears in numerous

* This article was written while Nicholas Zair was in receipt of a Pro Futura Scientia Fellowship based at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in Uppsala and the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities in Cambridge, funded by the Stiftelsen Riksbankens Jubileumsfond.

¹ See Hassall and Tomlin 1993: 310–314 and plate XV.A. The curse is also published by Kropp 2008: n. 3.19/3 and Urbanová 2018: n. 294. We have been unable to see the tablet, which is apparently in private hands. Hassall and Tomlin (1993: 310, n. 4) suggested that it would be deposited in Kegworth Village Museum, but a staff member at the museum reported that this never happened.

² Adams 2016: 418.

³ Perhaps saddlebags (Mullen 2013: 268).

⁴ See Mullen 2013: 266, n. 6 for the problems faced.

⁵ Krawiec 2007: 34.

subsequent works.⁶ Kropp explicitly interprets *in fanum* as *in fano*.⁷ Yet Hassall and Tomlin themselves correctly state that one dedicates or ‘gives’ a lost or stolen item to a temple or god, rather than ‘in a temple’.⁸ They even provide the relevant parallel, which shows an identical use of a different verb (*dono*) with *in* + accusative: *Tab. Sulis* 97.1–2 *Basilia donat in templum Martis anilum argenteum* ‘Basilia presents to the temple of Mars her silver ring.’⁹ The fact that *Tab. Sulis* 97 uses *templum* instead of *fanum* does not undermine the parallel: *fanum* has a wide range of meanings, for example ‘temple’, ‘open space before a temple’ and ‘temple area’.¹⁰ The *templum* or *fanum* has various functions in curse tablets concerning stolen items. Bath naturally provides some of the best comparanda, since the Bath tablets are typologically, geographically and chronologically similar to the one from Nottinghamshire. Tomlin himself has highlighted the possible functions of the *templum* or *fanum* in curse tablets from Bath:¹¹

- a. Where the curse takes effect: *Tab. Sulis* 5.5–8 *ut mentes sua perd[at] et oculos su[o]s in fano* ‘may he lose his mind and his eyes in the temple.’
- b. To where the property should be returned: *Tab. Sulis* 32.14–15 *nissi qd [te]mplum tuum istas res retulerint* ‘unless they bring those things to your temple.’
- c. The ‘recipient’ of the stolen item: *Tab. Sulis* 97.1–2 *Basilia donat in templum Martis anilum argenteum* ‘Basilia presents to the temple of Mars her silver ring.’
- d. The ‘recipient’ of the thief: *Tab. Sulis* 44.1–3 *a[e]n[um me]um qui leuauit [e]xconic[tu]s [e]st templo Sulis dono* ‘(The person) who has lifted my bronze vessel is utterly accursed. I give (them) to the temple of Sulis.’

In the Nottinghamshire tablet *fanum* has function (c) in the list above and the translation should read ‘I have dedicated to the temple of the god the mule ...’. Although the examples given above are from British curse tablets, the facts remain the same when we examine curse tablets concerning theft found elsewhere: the thief or property is ‘given’ to the deity; if the thief is given, then sometimes there is also a request that their sufferings not cease until the property is returned; if the property is given, it is for the deity to ‘exact’ or ‘pursue’ the stolen item.¹²

(ii) (line 2) *deuoui*

Hassall and Tomlin write *DEVOVI* in their diplomatic transcription, whilst in their commentary they say that the tablet here is damaged by corrosion and the traces they can see on the tablet resemble the meaningless sequence *DADV*S. As shown by the dots beneath the letters, they say that only the letter <V> near the end of the word is certain.¹³ Given the comparative rarity in curse tablets of the verb *deuoueo*,¹⁴ it seems better not to restore *deuoui* here, especially when the text is almost entirely illegible. Another problem with the verb *deuoueo* is that it usually has a human (namely the target of the curse) as its object, for example:

- a. *quos ...deuoui* ‘whom I have cursed’ (Barchín del Hoyo, Spain, 1st century AD; Kropp 2008 n. 2.1.2/1).
- b. *deuoueo eum* ‘I curse him’ (Bath, 3rd (?) century AD; Kropp 2008 n. 3.2/10 = *Tab. Sulis* 10.5).¹⁵

⁶ See, for example, Tomlin 2004: 346, Mullen 2013: 267, Mullen 2016: 586–587, Adams 2016: 418, Urbanová and Cuzzolin 2016: 331–332 and Melrose 2018: 38.

⁷ Kropp 2008: n. 3.19/3.

⁸ Hassall and Tomlin 1993: 313.

⁹ Translation from Adams 1992: 8. Cf. Tomlin’s recent translation: ‘Basilia gives into the temple of Mars a silver ring’ (Tomlin 2018: 215).

¹⁰ See Fridh 1990: 187.

¹¹ Tomlin 1988: 68.

¹² Tomlin 1988: 62.

¹³ Hassall and Tomlin 1993: 313.

¹⁴ Tomlin 1988: 122.

¹⁵ Hassall and Tomlin (1993: 313) also cite this example and note that *deuoueo* is used with the thief, rather than the stolen item, as its direct object. They even note that *dono* would be the expected verb in *Tab. Sulis* 10.5.

The perfect passive participle also occurs, again referring to humans:

- c. *deuotos, defixos* ‘cursed, bound (people)’ (Barchín del Hoyo, Spain, 1st century AD; Kropp 2008 n. 2.1.2/1).
- d. *deuotum, defictum* ‘cursed, bound (person)’ (Mainz, Germany, second half of 1st century AD; Kropp 2008 n. 5.1.5/8).

Outside curse tablets, humans are also the most commonly-cited objects in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, but inanimate objects do occur, e.g., in Tibullus:¹⁶

- e. Tib. 1.9.72 *deuoueat pro quo remque domumque tuam* ‘for him she would consign to ruin you and all your house.’¹⁷

There is also an example in Ovid:

- f. Ov. *Met.* 14.683 *solique suos tibi deuouet annos* ‘and he devotes his years to you alone.’¹⁸

The standard verb in use at Bath for both thieves and stolen items is *dono*. It is used of the property that has been stolen in both the present tense and the perfect tense:

- g. *Tab. Sulis* 34.2 *dono numini tuo pecuniam* ‘I give to your divinity the money.’
- h. *Tab. Sulis* 8 [d]εae Suli donauī [arge]ntiolos sex ‘I have given to the goddess Sulis the six silver coins.’

It is also used of thieves in both the present and the perfect:

- i. *Tab. Sulis* 16.1 *nomen furis ... donatur* ‘the name of the thief ... is given.’
- j. *Tab. Sulis* 65.2 *Mineruae deae Suli donauī furem* ‘to Minerva the goddess Sulis I have given the thief.’

In the absence of a better reading of the original, we would restore the verb [*dona*]u[*i*], which is both common and well suited to stolen items. Given Hassall and Tomlin’s description of the text as illegible at this point (apart from <V> near the end), we treat this portion as lost text, hence the use of brackets rather than dots.

(iii) (line 4) *hurta*

Hassall and Tomlin say that they can see *hurta* on the tablet, but they suggest emending this to *furta*, since they cannot make sense of *hurta*. They admit, however, that the letter <H> is clear and that their proposals for understanding *furta* are unconvincing. They provide two suggestions, both of which involve assuming that the scribe erroneously wrote <H> instead of <F>.¹⁹

Their preferred option is to take *furta* as a neuter plural meaning ‘things stolen’. They suggest that it be taken as the object of *inuolasit*, so that the phrase would mean ‘whoever stole the things stolen’. They call this an “inept variant” of *fraudem fecit*. Adams argues against a neuter plural *furta* on the grounds that only one ‘object’ (the mule) has been mentioned at this point, so a plural would not be expected.²⁰

Hassall and Tomlin’s second suggestion is to take *furta* as adverbial. It could even, they suggest, be a mistake for an adverb *furto*. It could then be taken with *moriatur* and mean ‘may he die secretly’. Why, however, would the author wish the person to ‘die secretly’? What exactly would ‘to die secretly’ mean? No parallels are given for such a wish.

Since neither explanation of *furta* makes good sense, it does not seem wise to read <F> where the scribe clearly wrote <H>. Adams instead suggests that a second stolen item would be appropriate in this position.²¹ A comparison of the structure of this disputed phrase in line 4 with lines 2–3 supports this

¹⁶ Examples (e) and (f) are also cited by Bömer (1986: 211) in his commentary on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.

¹⁷ Here we have revised Postgate’s translation, which appears in Cornish *et al.* 1995.

¹⁸ Translation from Hill 2000.

¹⁹ See Hassall and Tomlin 1993: 314 for their proposals.

²⁰ Adams 2016: 420.

²¹ Adams 2016: 420.

suggestion. The text would then have (lines 2–3) *çuicumque ñum[e]n inuolasit mola illam* ‘whichever person stole that mule’ followed by (line 4) *q[ui]çumque inuo[l]a[sit] hurta* ‘whoever stole the *hurta*’, i.e. two parallel phrases with the same basic structure, ‘whoever stole’ followed by the stolen item. Each time the phrase is also followed by a wish that the thief die: the first wish is the detailed version, *ut samguin suum ñittat usque diem quò moriatur* ‘may he lose his own blood until the day he die’, whereas the second wish is simply *moriatur* ‘may he die’. This kind of repetitive structure is characteristic of curse tablets.

In order to identify this second stolen item, Adams connects *hurta* with Germanic *hurda* ‘hurdle, fence’ (Adams does not specify beyond ‘Germanic’). He explains the situation as follows:²² “One might speculate that a piece of hurdle fencing had been removed when the mule was taken.” He proposes that *hurta* was introduced from the Continent, where *hurda* might have been in use among Latin speakers. He does not, however, explain voiceless /t/ for voiced /d/. Voiceless /t/ would require a High German sound shift that occurred after the 4th century AD and that took place in the southeast of the Germanic-speaking world.²³ Perhaps even more problematic is the sense. The theft of a piece of fencing is not otherwise attested in curse tablets and there is no evidence that it would have been valuable enough to have been worth stealing. Furthermore, an amount of fencing large enough to be valuable would presumably have been difficult to remove. Adams offers a second suggestion that he himself describes as even less likely to be correct, namely a connection with Latin *horda* ‘pregnant (cow)’, a word that “seems to have been rare, dialectal and early”.²⁴

Another animal would, however, fit well here, since the stolen property includes a mule and a fodder-basket. The letter <T> seems clear enough in the drawing, making a connection with *hircus* ‘he-goat’ (‘male goat’) difficult.²⁵ We therefore suggest that *hurta* may be connected with (somewhat later) *hurtus* and *hurtardus/hurtaldus*, which all mean ‘ram’ (‘adult male sheep’) and are attested in British Latin of the medieval period (the *DMLBS* gives *hurtardus* in 1211 as the earliest citation). Other cognates are also attested in the medieval period, e.g. the diminutive *hurtardiculus* (perhaps ‘an immature ram’), and *hurtare* ‘to copulate’ (of a ram with a ewe). Latin *hurtus* has a Germanic origin (cf. ON *hrútr* ‘ram’), something which would not be unparalleled, as Adams argues in his case for *hurta* meaning ‘hurdle’:²⁶ for example, *baro* ‘man’, which occurs in other British curse tablets (but not in this inscription), is of Germanic origin. Apart from traders and trade, another source for Germanic lexemes would have been the army. Soldiers (e.g. the Tungrians and Batavians) at the Roman fort at Vindolanda in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD came from areas in which Germanic languages were spoken, as shown by a Latin letter from Vindolanda written by a non-native speaker with the Germanic name *Chrauttius*.²⁷

It is worth noting that before the Bath curse tablets *baro* was only known from Germanic law codes of the 6th century AD and later.²⁸ Consequently, the fact that *hurtus* and *hurtardus/hurtaldus* are attested late is not necessarily decisive. We would therefore interpret *hurta* as a feminine accusative singular, just like *mola* in line 3. It would either mean ‘ewe’ or, like *mula*, it could be the feminine used as the generic term ‘a

²² Adams 2016: 420.

²³ We are indebted to Torsten Meißner for this observation. See also van der Wal and Quak 1994: 90–91.

²⁴ Adams 2016: 421.

²⁵ This does not seem to have been suggested before. As the sublinear dot in the transcription suggests, Tomlin’s drawing shows that the <V> in *hurta* is formed unlike other examples of the letter on the tablet. It could be argued that one of the strokes is the letter <I> whilst the other is a scratch or error: this would explain why the two strokes cross like those of <X> rather than <V>. No spellings in this text show evidence of T/C confusion, but it is worth noting that there was potential for confusion between the noun *hircus* and the adjective *hirtus* ‘rough, hairy’, which may have been etymologically related (see de Vaan 2008 s.vv.).

²⁶ Adams 2016: 420.

²⁷ On the letter from *Chrauttius*, see Clackson and Horrocks 2011: 244–249. For influence from Germanic languages on Latin (but outside Britain), see Adams 2003: 279–280, 447–450, Adams 2007: 329–335, 677–678, and, especially in a military context, Green 1998: 184–188.

²⁸ Adams 1992: 15.

sheep'.²⁹ With some equivocation regarding whether the animal was male or female, we therefore translate as follows: 'whoever stole the sheep, may he die.' The victims have therefore had a mule and a sheep stolen.

(iv) (line 7) *VERTOGN*

Russell has suggested that *VERTOGN* is a diminutive of the lexeme preserved in Welsh *gwerth* 'value', and hence means something like 'a small item of value'.³⁰ That the word comes from the Celtic language spoken in Britain at the time (henceforth 'British Celtic') is very likely: apart from the fact that it is hard to identify any Latin word that it could be, there are a number of features of the language and context of the curse tablet which suggest that the author may have been a British Celtic speaker.³¹

Russell's suggestion for *VERTOGN* is a plausible one, given the existence of the Welsh form and the diminutive value of the *-gno-* suffix in Gaulish, to which British Celtic is presumably still closely similar at this stage.³² Moreover, 'small items of value' are certainly the sort of thing to which British curse tablets often refer. Perhaps, however, it is a little less likely in the context of this particular tablet, in which the thief otherwise seems to have stolen largish items of solidly agricultural type, although of course we are free to imagine almost anything being kept 'in the stable or saddle bags'.³³ If the meaning of *VERTOGN* is really as general as 'a small item of value', then it is strange that the author was not more precise, since the text is otherwise specific about what has been stolen; it even provides the further detail of exactly where the fodder-basket (and the *VERTOGN*) may have been. Of course, something originally meaning 'small item of value' may have become more specialised, as Russell notes.³⁴

But the major difficulty with *VERTOGN* is the lack of an ending. Nouns formed with the suffix **-gno-* are *ā*-stems or *o*-stems in Celtic languages. If *VERTOGN* were a borrowing into Latin, then we would expect it to have a first or second declension ending *-am* or *-um*; if, instead, we consider it to be a code-switch into Celtic, then the absence of an ending is still surprising. Russell acknowledges this problem and suggests that "it is possible that a nasal ending, perhaps *-um* or *-am*, was lost after the final nasal of the stem either phonetically or through eye-skip or haplogy".³⁵

Russell perhaps has a sort of dissimilation in mind when he talks of the nasal ending being lost phonetically after the nasal of the stem, but this is very much an *ad hoc* explanation, with no other evidence either in the tablet or in the later Celtic languages to support it.

An alternative solution would be to connect the missing final syllable to the apocope of final syllables that British Celtic underwent early in its history. But this probably did not take place as early as the 3rd or 4th century AD. Jackson dates the loss of final syllables to the middle of the 6th century AD, with a previous reduction of short vowels to schwa and long vowels to short vowels around the end of the 5th century AD.³⁶ Sims-Williams' discussion of the chronology of Brittonic sound changes basically agrees with this.³⁷ According to him, on the basis of non-epigraphic evidence it must have happened by the second half of the 6th century AD, while inscriptions showing apocope can be dated to the 5th or 6th centuries (as can ones which ought to come from a time earlier than apocope). So, unless the tablet is dated significantly later than hitherto supposed, the lack of an ending remains unexpected and problematic.

²⁹ See Adams 1993.

³⁰ Russell 2013: 209. His suggestion is also referenced in Mullen 2013: 269, n. 22.

³¹ The linguistic evidence, as enumerated by Mullen 2013: 269, is: (i) the Celtic names of the victims, on whose behalf the curse was written; (ii) the form *deuo*, which is either the Celtic word for 'god' or a 'Celtic' spelling of Latin *deus*, as shown by the insertion of [w] as a glide between the two vowels in hiatus (cf. Welsh *pydew* 'well' < **putewus* < Latin *puteus*).

³² We have almost no written evidence of British Celtic during the first few centuries AD. For a couple of possible cases, see Mullen 2007.

³³ And Russell does also point to Welsh *gwartheg*, Middle Cornish *guarthech* 'cattle' as being related to *gwerth*.

³⁴ Russell 2013: 209.

³⁵ Russell 2013: 209, n. 20.

³⁶ Jackson 1953: 573–575, 631–633, 695–696.

³⁷ Sims-Williams 2003: 284, 290, 293.

Haplology involves the omission of a syllable when following a similar or identical one, but the proposed ending *-um* or *-am* is hardly similar enough to the preceding *-OGN* to trigger it. Of course, eye-skip as an explanation cannot be ruled out, and there do seem to be other mechanical mistakes on the tablet, but an explanation that does not rely on a scribal error would be preferable.

The only other suggestion regarding *VERTOGN* seems to be Adams' tentative note that "the beginning is certainly suggestive of the Celtic term for a fast dog used in hunting" (i.e. *uertragos*).³⁸ We believe that he was right in his identification of the prefix, which, however, leaves the second part of the word unexplained.

This can be rectified by taking into account that the original editors in fact allowed for a different reading, *VERTOGIA*, commenting that "N could be read as IA (the cross-bar being lost in damage)".³⁹ This *VERTOGIA* could be the British Celtic equivalent of Middle Welsh *gortho* 'covering, veil, canopy, roof' and Middle Irish *fortche* 'a covering' (the senses given by *eDIL* include a rug or cushion for a chariot, and a sheath for covering a spear). These words are compounds of the preposition **wor* 'over' and the noun **togyā*: the latter becomes Middle Welsh *to* 'roof, ceiling, thatch',⁴⁰ Old Irish *tugae* 'cover, covering, protection, roof',⁴¹ and comes from the same root as Latin *toga* 'toga' and Greek *τέγω* 'cover'.⁴²

VERTOGIA is almost directly superimposable on the forms attested in the later languages. The major difference is that the preverb appears as *VER-* rather than reflecting the vocalism of **wor*, but *uer* is established as the British Celtic form by its appearance in the names of places and tribes (*Verloucio*, *Vernemetum*, *Viruedrum* (for *Ver-*), *Verturiones*, *Verubium*)⁴³ and in personal names (*Verconus*, *Verica*)⁴⁴ and also appears in Gaulish.⁴⁵ This *uer-* is the direct descendant of Proto-Indo-European **uper*, which gives, e.g., Greek *ὑπέρ* 'above'. The form **wor-*, which subsequently appears in the Brittonic languages and Irish, is possibly an ablaut variant **upor*, but since no other Indo-European language attests the *o*-grade, it seems more likely that Brittonic and Irish have at some point replaced **wer-* with **wor-*, perhaps by analogy with **wo* 'under' < **upo*.⁴⁶

The expected accusative ending would be *-m*, but the writer of the curse also misses out final *m* in (line 3) *mola(m)* and (line 4) *hurta(m)*, so its absence here is not problematic. A covering of some sort (perhaps a saddle-blanket, horse-blanket or a rug for a wagon)⁴⁷ would fit well with the other objects stolen from the stable or saddlebags. *VERTOGIA* could therefore be a borrowing from British Celtic into the local variety of Latin spoken by the author. There are similar examples of Celtic words borrowed into Latin at Vindolanda, such as *souxum* 'an earthenware vessel'⁴⁸ and *uocridem* 'some kind of binding used in the manufacture of wagons'.⁴⁹

Interpreting *VERTOGIA* as *uertogia(m)*, a feminine noun in the accusative singular, not only fits with phonological developments in British Celtic but also provides a feminine singular antecedent for (line 8) *illam*.

(v) (line 7) *uel uissacio*

Adams translates the final sentence as "Whoever stole it and the (*VERTOGN*) from the stable, or the double bag, whoever stole it, may he die by the god". He explains as follows: "It is unlikely that *uel uissacio* is

³⁸ Adams 2016: 421.

³⁹ Hassall and Tomlin 1993: 314, n. 8.

⁴⁰ *To* is often traced back to **togos*, a different formation from the same root, but Schrijver (1995: 311, 312–313) shows that it can also come from **togyā* (both *to* and *gortho* appear as both masculine and feminine: see *GPC* s.vv.).

⁴¹ Attested in Old Irish in the dat. sg. *tubai* (with varia lectio *tugai*), dat. pl. *tugaib* (*eDIL*, s.v. *tugae*).

⁴² See *LEIA* T-167 s.v. *tugae* and Matasović 2009: 376 s.v. *tegos-* 'house'.

⁴³ Rivet and Smith 1979, s.vv.

⁴⁴ *CPNRB*, s.vv. *Verconus* and *Verica*.

⁴⁵ Delamarre 2003: 313, s.v. *uer(o)-*.

⁴⁶ Evans 1967: 279.

⁴⁷ We owe the first suggestion here to Paul Russell.

⁴⁸ Adams 2007: 597–598.

⁴⁹ Russell 2011.

part of the *de*-expression that precedes, as the objects of theft that seem to be referred to here could hardly have been kept in a bag, double or otherwise. *Vissacio* must be an accusative, with a banal omission of *-m* and vocalic misspelling, the word referring to another stolen object (punctuate with a comma after *ospitio*).⁵⁰ Although Adams does not state this explicitly, the misspelling he envisages is presumably <O> for <A>, allowing *uissaci<a>(m)* to agree with *illam* in the following clause.⁵¹

We agree that, even if they could fit, it seems unlikely that a mule or sheep could be conveniently kept in saddlebags for any length of time; but the same is not necessarily true of the *VERTOGN* (for which we read *uertogīa*). Moreover, the use of *uel* in *de ospitio uel uissacio* seems to militate against this reading: when the author adds another stolen item to the list, the conjunction *et* is used; *uel* does not seem appropriate for adding an additional item. Since the proposal by Adams requires the combination of omission of *-m*, an incorrect vowel and an odd use of *uel*, it is perhaps better to understand the text as it is written, i.e. as an ablative singular. The final sentence can be translated thus: ‘Whoever stole it (the fodder-basket) and the blanket from the stable or the saddlebags, whoever stole it, may he die by the god.’ The author is therefore uncertain about where the blanket was when it was stolen.

Bibliography and Abbreviations

- Adams, J. N. 1992. British Latin: the Text, Interpretation and Language of the Bath Curse Tablets, *Britannia* 23, pp. 1–26.
- 1993. The Generic Use of *mula* and the Status and Employment of Female Mules in the Roman World, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 136, pp. 35–61.
- 2003. *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*. Cambridge.
- 2007. *The Regional Diversification of Latin 200 BC – AD 600*. Cambridge.
- 2016. *An Anthology of Informal Latin 200 BC – AD 900*. Cambridge.
- Bömer, F. 1986. *P. Ovidius Naso Metamorphosen. Buch XIV–XV*. Heidelberg.
- Clackson, J. and Horrocks, G. 2011. *The Blackwell History of the Latin Language*. Oxford/Malden (MA).
- Cornish, F. W. et al. 1995. *Catullus, Tibullus, Pervigilium Veneris*. Cambridge (MA).
- CPNRB = *Celtic Personal Names of Roman Britain* [www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/personalnames/] [accessed 20/05/2019].
- Delamarre, X. 2003. *Dictionnaire de la langue gauloise. Une approche linguistique du vieux-celtique continental*. Paris.
- DMLBS = Ashdowne, R., Howlett, D. R. and Latham, R. E. (eds) 2018. *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*. London.
- eDIL = *Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language* [www.dil.ie] [accessed 18/05/2019].
- Evans, D. E. 1967. *Gaulish Personal Names. A Study of Some Continental Celtic Formations*. Oxford.
- Fridh, Å. 1990. Sacellum, sacrarium, fanum, and Related Terms, in Teodorsson, S.-T. (ed.), *Greek and Latin Studies in Memory of Cajus Fabricius*, pp. 173–187. Gothenburg.
- GPC = *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru. A Dictionary of the Welsh Language* [www.welsh-dictionary.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html] [accessed 18/05/2019].
- Green, D. H. 1998. *Language and History in the Germanic World*. Cambridge.
- Hassall, M. W. C. and Tomlin, R. S. O. 1993. Roman Britain in 1992. II. Inscriptions, *Britannia* 24, pp. 310–322, plates XV–XVI.
- Hill, D. E. 2000. *Ovid. Metamorphoses XIII–XV*. Warminster.
- Jackson, K. H. 1953. *Language and History in Early Britain. A Chronological Survey of the Brittonic Languages, First to Twelfth Century A.D.* Edinburgh.
- Krawiec, K. 2007. *Red Hill Marina, Ratcliffe on Soar: An Archaeological Evaluation. Fieldwork Summary 2007 (Project Number 1588)*. York: Archaeology Data Service [https://doi.org/10.5284/1023789] [unpublished report by Birmingham Archaeology and only available online].
- Kropp, A. 2008. *Magische Sprachverwendung in vulgärlateinischen Fluchtafeln (defixiones)*. Tübingen [references in the format ‘Kropp 2008 n. 3.2/10’ refer to the corpus of inscriptions on the CD accompanying this volume].
- LEIA = Vendryes, J. E., Bachellery, E. and Lambert, P.-Y. 1959–. *Lexique étymologique de l’irlandais ancien*. Dublin/Paris.

⁵⁰ Adams 2016: 421. On the meaning of *hospitium*, see Mullen 2013: 267.

⁵¹ *Bisaccium* is neuter in its only appearance in Latin literature, at Petronius, *Satyricon* 31, but is feminine in a scholiast, and in the Romance languages (TLL 2.2012, s.v. *bisaccium*).

- Matasović, R. 2009. *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic*. Leiden/Boston.
- Melrose, R. 2018. *Magic in Britain. A History of Medieval and Earlier Practices*. Jefferson (NC).
- Mullen, A. 2007. Evidence for Written Celtic from Roman Britain: a Linguistic Analysis of *Tabellae Sulis* 14 and 18, *Studia Celtica* 41, pp. 31–45.
- 2013. New Thoughts on British Latin: a Curse Tablet from Red Hill, Ratcliffe-on-Soar (Nottinghamshire), *ZPE* 187, pp. 266–272.
- 2016. Sociolinguistics, in Millett, M., Revell, L. and Moore, A. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Britain*, pp. 573–598. Oxford.
- Rivet, A. L. F. and Smith, C. 1979. *The Place Names of Roman Britain*. London.
- Russell, P. 2011. *Vocridem*: a New British Word from Vindolanda, *Studia Celtica* 45, pp. 192–197.
- 2013. From Compound to Derivative: the Development of a Patronymic ‘Suffix’ in Gaulish, in García Alonso, J. L. (ed.), *Continental Celtic Word Formation. The Onomastic Data*, pp. 201–214. Salamanca.
- Schrijver, P. 1995. *Studies in British Celtic Historical Phonology*. Amsterdam/Atlanta (GA).
- Sims-Williams, P. 2003. *The Celtic Inscriptions of Britain. Phonology and Chronology, c. 400–1200*. Oxford/Malden (MA).
- Tab. Sulis* = text appears in Tomlin 1988.
- TLL* = 1900–. *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*. Leipzig/Berlin/Boston.
- Tomlin, R. S. O. 1988. The Curse Tablets, in Cunliffe, B. (ed.), *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath. Volume 2: The Finds from the Sacred Spring*, pp. 59–277. Oxford.
- 2004. A Roman Inscribed Tablet from Red Hill, Ratcliffe-on-Soar (Nottinghamshire), *The Antiquaries Journal* 84, pp. 346–352.
- 2018. Literacy in Roman Britain, in Kolb, A. (ed.), *Literacy in Ancient Everyday Life*, pp. 201–219. Berlin.
- Urbanová, D. 2018. *Latin Curse Tablets of the Roman Empire*. Innsbruck.
- Urbanová, D. and Cuzzolin, P. 2016. Some Linguistic and Pragmatic Remarks on the *tabellae defixionum*, *The Journal of Latin Linguistics* 15, pp. 313–345.
- de Vaan, M. 2008. *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages*. Leiden/Boston.
- van der Wal, M. J. and Quak, A. 1994. Old and Middle Continental West Germanic, in König, E. and van der Auwera, J. (eds), *The Germanic Languages*, pp. 72–109. London/New York.

Moreed Arbabzadah, Pembroke College, Cambridge
mra34@cam.ac.uk

Nicholas Zair, Peterhouse, Cambridge
naz21@cam.ac.uk