



# History: Legio XIII GMV

**Caesar's Fourteenth Legion.** Legio XIII, the fourteenth legion, was probably established by Gaius Iulius Caesar in 57 BC to replace recent losses during the war in Gaul before continuing the offensive against the Belgae. Caesar certainly implies the existence of a fourteenth legion in his account of the battle against another Gallic tribe, the Nervii. It is highly likely, although not readily attested, that Legio XIII continued to play an active part in Caesar's conquests up to the end of 54 BC.

In the winter of 54/53BC, the previously pacified Eburones, a Germanic speaking tribe living between the river Meuse and the *Rhenus* (river Rhein), revolted against the Roman presence. The Eburones, led by Ambiorix who had been in receipt of great gifts from Gaius Iulius Caesar, attacked and destroyed Legio XIII and five newly-enrolled cohorts encamped in their territory near Tongres. The legates, Titurius Sabinus and Arunculeius Cotta, made the mistake of leaving the safety of their encampment and the Roman garrison, some 7,000 men, was all but annihilated. The Aquilifer of Legio XIII saved the unit's eagle standard from immediate capture by hurling it over the ramparts of the Roman camp, just before he was cut down. The resistance was to no avail, for that night all the remaining legionary survivors committed suicide.

In the winter of the following season, 53/52BC, the newly-formed Legio XIII, under the command of Quintus Cicero [the brother of the orator], was attacked in its winter quarters by a large contingent of marauding Germanic cavalry. Cicero was not strong-willed enough to restrain his troops from venturing outside the walls of the fort, and again, the legion was severely mauled. Fortunately, Gaius Iulius Caesar himself was able to reach the embattled legion in time and caused the Germans to withdraw. The legion was quickly reconstituted with the soldiers of the new Legio XIII probably earned their spurs during Caesar's siege of Alesia.

During the civil war the legion opposed the forces of Gnaeus Pompeius "Magnus" (Pompey the Great) in the Spanish campaign (April to August 49 BC) that culminated in the defeat of the Pompeian army, commanded by Lucius Afranius and Marcus Petrius, at the battle of Ilerda. The legion's involvement in this campaign is attested by the recorded death, in action, of the *primus pilus* (senior centurion) of Legio XIII. In the spring of 48 BC, Legio XIII was one of seven legions that crossed from Italia to Dyrrhachium (Dürres in modern Albania) where it became embroiled in the siege works and skirmishes that epitomised the battle between Caesar and Pompey for this major supply port. It is not certain from the contemporary sources whether Legio XIII was present at the battle of Pharsalus (August 48 BC) and thus whether they were part of Caesar's decisive victory over Pompey. Regardless, in late 48 BC the legion's veteran soldiers are noted as returning to Italy to be pensioned off. However, a mere two years later they were participating in Caesar's African campaign (46 BC).

The next mention of Legio XIII is after 41 BC when the old legion was possibly again reconstituted or a fresh unit was raised. The reasons behind establishing a new unit are not known but may explain why the legion's emblem is a Capricorn, the sign of Gaius Julius Caesar's adopted heir Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus (Octavian). Whatever the truth, Legio XIII was certainly employed by Octavian to end Sextus Pompeius' (younger son of Pompey the Great) occupation of Sicily and thus liberate the island's vital grain supply for Rome. With Sextus Pompeius finally defeated in 36 BC, the relationship between Octavian and his fellow triumvir Marcus Antonius deteriorated over the next few years as the struggle for supremacy continued. Ultimately, Octavian defeated his opponent in the naval battle off Actium (31 BC) and became undisputed master of the Roman world. Heralded as Augustus by the Senate, he created the Principate, a veiled form of monarchy that was to endure for over 300 years. As for Legio XIII, it was reinforced with soldiers from Marc Antony's disbanded legions and subsequently had "Gemina", or twin, added to its title. As such Legio XIII Gemina was sent to Illyricum (although a very brief stay in Gallia Aquitania or Gallia Transpadana can not be excluded) where it stayed for the next forty years.

**Augustus' Fourteenth Legion.** The title "Gemina", suggests the Fourteenth as a legion formed by the amalgamation of two existing formations. Although there is evidence to show Augustus' Legio X Gemina is directly descended from the remnants of Caesar's favourite Legio X Equestris, there is no direct evidence for the genesis of Legions XIII Gemina and XIII Gemina. This may be due simply to the incompleteness of the literary

and epigraphic record. Regardless, Legio XIII Gemina is associated with the Capricorn emblem that normally attests a foundation (or reconstitution) under Augustus. For Augustus the Capricorn was an important emblem symbolising good luck as it was the zodiacal sign under which he was conceived. Other legions with the Capricorn are Legio II Augusta, Legio XXI Rapax, and possibly Legio III Scythica (vide Legio II Augusta).

**Campaigning with Augustus.** In AD 6 Augustus planned a final campaign against King Maroboduus of the Marcomanni in Czechia (modern Bohemia), with the territory linking the Danube and the Elbe being the strategic objective. The addition of Marcomanni lands would consolidate the frontier of the Roman Empire in one uninterrupted line from east to west along the courses of the two rivers. Augustus' son-in-law, Tiberius Claudius Nero, was to lead a force of eight legions (comprising Legio VIII Augusta from Pannonia; Legio XIII Gemina, Legio XV Apollinaris and Legio XX Valeria from Illyricum; Legio XXI Rapax from Raetia; Legio XIII Gemina, Legio XVI Gallica from Germania Superior and one other) north and west from Carnuntum on the river Danube, while leaving another two legions (VII and XI) in the new province of Moesia just to the east. Using a considerable part of the Rhine army under the command of Sentius Saturninus, another force of five legions (Legio I Germanica, Legio V Alaudae and the ill-fated Legio XVII, Legio XVIII and Legio XIX) was to execute a pincer movement, striking east from Germania along the river Elbe.

Augustus' grand plans were not to be as in that year the whole of Pannonia and Dalmatia erupted in revolt. Tiberius, already on the march, was forced to turn back and deal with the menace to his rear. He devised a pincer of his own, and trapped the rebels between the forces under his personal command and the reinforcements arriving from Moesia. Regardless the uprising took three years to suppress, frustrating Augustus' expansion of the Empire. A further set back occurred in September AD 9 when the Roman army suffered probably its greatest humiliating defeat. Three legions, Legio XVII, XVIII and XIX, under the command P Quinctilius Varus were annihilated in the Teutoburger forest by German tribes co-ordinated and led by Arminius. During the re-deployment of the Roman forces after this military disaster, Legio XIII Gemina was transferred to Mainz in Germania Superior.

**Defending the Frontier.** In AD 14, Tiberius Claudius Nero succeeded his uncle Augustus and almost immediately the legions in Pannonia and Germania mutinied. Tiberius' son, Drusus, successfully ended the mutiny in Pannonia but the disruption in Germania was far more serious. Throughout this period, and indeed Tiberius' entire reign, Legio XIII Gemina was stationed in a fortress on the middle Rhene (river Rhine) at Moguntiacum (Mainz, Germany). As one of the legions stationed in Germania Superior (upper Germany), Legio XIII Gemina and its sister legions II Augusta, III, and XVI under governor Gaius Silius, remained loyal to the new Emperor. However, the governor of Germania Inferior (lower Germany), Aulus Caecina, was incapable of placating his four legions, which included Legio XX Valeria that would later be part of the army to invade Britain. The rebellious legions tried to declare the commander of Gallia and Germania, Germanicus Caesar, emperor but, as the adopted son of Tiberius, he refused. Eventually Germanicus managed to quell the rebellion and started to plan a new campaign to avenge the defeat of Varus. In AD 15, Germanicus and Caecina attacked the responsible German tribes with both Legio II Augusta and Legio XIII Gemina following Germanicus. It was a long and difficult two years of campaigning which while tactically successful did not achieve the strategic defeat of the Germanic tribes.

**Service in Britannia.** In AD 43, the new Emperor Claudius, raised to the purple by the Praetorian Guard in the aftermath of the assassination of his nephew Caligula, needed a military victory to consolidate his position. Using an army drawn principally from Germania, Claudius ordered Legio II Augusta from Strasbourg, IX Hispana from Pannonia, XIII Gemina from Mainz and XX Valeria Victrix from Colonia Agrippina to invade Britannia. The invasion force of some 20,000 legionaries and an equal number of auxiliaries was commanded by the highly experienced *propraetor* Aulus Plautius, a Consul in AD 29. It is possible that the fourteenth legion was under the personal command of the *legatus legionis* Titus Flavius Sabinianus, the brother of the future emperor Titus Flavius Vespasianus who was himself *legatus legionis* of Legio II Augusta. After the first phase of the conquest, Legio XIII Gemina was very likely the first legion to establish a semi-permanent fortress on British soil at Manduessedum (Mancetter, Warwickshire), on the north-western edge of the tribal territories of the Catuvellauni. A fortress was certainly occupied by AD 46 and was thus positioned at the edge of the fledgling Roman province of Britannia.

The legion very likely saw action under the personal command of the *propraetor* Publius Ostorius Scapula, the governor of Britain from AD 47 until his untimely death on campaign in AD 52. The governor campaigned first against the Cornovii tribe of the northwest Midlands, and then against the Deceangi of North Wales. Legio XIII Gemina's advance into North Wales was prematurely halted due to unrest in the north of England among the Brigantes tribe. It is very likely that the Fourteenth was hastily withdrawn from Wales and, supported by Legio IX Hispana stationed in Lincolnshire, used to intimidate the tribes into submission.

For most of the next decade after the Brigantian revolt, Legio XIII Gemina conducted offensive operations against the Welsh tribes; the Silures in the south and the Ordovices in mid-Wales, Snowdonia and Anglesey. During this period, the legion was redeployed from Manduessedum (Mancetter, Warwickshire) to a new



fortress near the Welsh border at Viroconium Cornoviorum (Wroxeter, Shropshire) on the east bank of the river Severn; the tribal centre of the Cornovii.

**Legio XIII Gemina Martia Victrix.** In AD 60, the governor Suetonius Paulinus, was campaigning in North Wales, culminating in the invasion of Isla Mona (Anglesey), to destroy the influence of the druids. At this time, news reached Paulinus that the eastern tribes, led by queen Boudicca of the Icenii, were in open revolt. The nearest Roman force was Legio IX Hispana stationed in Peterborough/Humber area. According to Tacitus (*Annals*) *legatus legionis* Quintus Petilius Cerialis gathered what forces he could quickly muster and marched towards the vulnerable *colonia* of Camulodunum (Colchester). Boudicca's tribal army was too strong and Camulodunum was razed to the ground; Cerialis' force was virtually annihilated, with its commander lucky to escape with the legion's cavalry. Tacitus' account has led many to believe Legio IX Hispana was completely destroyed, yet the speed and boldness with which Cerialis reacted suggests he deployed with only a fraction of the full legion, perhaps 2,000 men. This is supported by evidence that Legio IX Hispana was reinforced by 2,000 legionaries from the continent to bring it to full strength.

With Legio IX Hispana severely mauled, Legio XIII Gemina together with veteran elements drawn from Legio XX Valeria and several Auxiliary cohorts from mid-Wales began a forced march to counter the threat. Unsure of the enemy's strength or disposition, Paulinus was forced to abandon *Londinium* and the *colonia* of *Verulamium* (near St. Albans) to their fate. In all an estimated 70,000 Romans and Romanised Britons were massacred by the Boudiccan forces. Ever the tactician, Paulinus chose to face the Britons on ground of his own choosing, possibly near Manduessedum, to give his force of 10,000 legionaries and auxiliaries the maximum advantage over the 80,000 Britons (according to Tacitus). For its part in the utter destruction of the Icenii, Trinovantes and other allies, Legio XIII Gemina was awarded the honorific titles "Martia" and "Victrix" (warlike and victorious). Legio XX Valeria was also awarded the additional title "Victrix" for its part in ending the Boudiccan revolt.

In AD 67, the veteran Legio XIII Gemina Martia Victrix was withdrawn from Britain on the orders of the Emperor Nero, ostensibly to campaign against the Parthians, but found itself stationed on the Rhene (river Rhine) where again the German tribes were threatening the frontier. They were replaced in the fortress at Wroxeter by Legio XX Valeria Victrix. The legion remained in Germania Superior until the civil war erupted over Nero's succession in AD 69 when Legio XIII Gemina Martia Victrix declared its support for Otho.

**The Year of the Four Emperors.** Following his victory at the battle of Bedriacum, and the collapse of further resistance with the death of Otho, Vitellius was worried by the far from submissive attitude of Otho's beaten legions. While scattered throughout Italy, in close association with the victors, their language was still that of an enemy. Particular defiance was shown by the Legio XIII Gemina Martia Victrix, whose men refused to accept they had been defeated. They asserted that at the battle of Bedriacum it had only been their advance-party alone that had been routed as the main body of the legion had not been present. It was decided that the legion should be returned to Britain, reversing the Nero's order of AD 67. In the meantime, the legionaries were ordered to share camp with the Batavian cohorts, with whom they were on bad terms. Soon the simmering hostility between these two groups of armed men flared into open conflict.

One day, a workman in Turin was being abused by a Batavian for cheating him, but defended by a legionary who had been billeted on the workman. The two opponents were joined by their respective comrades, and verbal abuse ultimately led to bloodshed. Indeed, desperate fighting would have occurred had not two praetorian cohorts aided the legionaries of the Fourteenth, providing them with encouragement, and intimidated the Batavians. To avoid further breaches of discipline, Vitellius attached Legio XIII Gemina to his column of march, to demonstrate how much he valued their loyalty. The legion was ordered to cross the Alps by the Little St Bernard Pass and take a circuitous route avoiding Vienna, regarded as a danger-point. On the night of their departure, however, the legionaries left fires alight everywhere and part of the city of Turin was burnt down. The memory of this destruction, like that of many other calamities in war, has been largely effaced by the more dreadful fate of other cities. When the Fourteenth had descended from the Alps into lower country, the most unruly elements in the legion tried to lead the way to Vienna, but this action was obstructed by the more level-headed men. Legio XIII Gemina returned to Britannia without incident only to be recalled to counter various uprisings later that same year.

**Batavian Revolt.** In AD 69, Legio XIII Gemina Martia Victrix was one of nine legions under the command of Quintus Petilius Cerialis and Appius Amicus Gallus, ordered in the name of Vespasian, to crush the revolt of Julius Civilis in Batavia and Germania Inferior. Following Civilis' capitulation, Legio XIII Gemina Martia Victrix was transported across the North Sea by the *Classis Britannica* to subdue the Tungrii and Nervii tribes (in modern day Belgium). The legion joined Legio I Adiutrix at its old Tiberian-era base at Moguntiacum on the Rhine Frontier.

**Finally the Danube.** In c. AD 93, the Emperor Domitian ordered the legion to move from Moguntiacum to Aquincum (Budapest, Hungary) to replace Legio XXI Rapax, which had probably been destroyed during Dacian uprisings along the Danube Frontier. Legio XIII Gemina Martia Victrix was first stationed at Osijek, and then



later at Vienna. Following Trajan's ill-fated Parthian expedition, which had drawn troops from the Danube, Legio XIII Gemina Martia Victrix was moved from Vindobona ( ) to Carnuntum (East of Vienna) to replace Legio XV Apollinaris (which had remained in the East). The Fourteenth was in turn replaced at Vindobona by Legio X Gemina. For Legio XIII Gemina Martia Victrix, it remained at Carnuntum into the reign of Septimius Severus (AD 193 - 211) and for the next three centuries until the beginning of the 5th century AD.

**Final Mention?** With the collapse of the Danube frontier in the AD 430s, the Legion was probably dissolved and its constituent cohorts re-deployed. The Notitia Dignitatum lists a Quartodecimani comitatensis under the Magister Militum per Thracias. This unit would appear to have been one of two detachments of the old Legio XIII assigned to the Dux Pannoniae primae et Norici ripensis. Each detachment is recorded as commanded by a Praefectus. One, apparently the V<sup>th</sup> Cohort, remained stationed at the legion's old fort in Carnuntum, while the other was downstream at Arrabona (Győr) and brigaded with a detachment of the X<sup>th</sup>. Both units are described as "militum liburnariorum", which is presumed to mean they operating as marines for the Classis Pannoniae. The Notitia Dignitatum records the shield design shown opposite as that of the Quartodecimani comitatensis.

