

**Zeitschrift:** Bulletin de l'Association Pro Aventico  
**Herausgeber:** Association Pro Aventico (Avenches)  
**Band:** 20 (1969)

**Artikel:** Q. Otacilius Pollinus of Aventivcum  
**Autor:** Reynolds, Joyce  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-243102>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 07.03.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## Q. Otacilius Pollinus of Aventicum

Joyce REYNOLDS

The fragmentary but splendid inscription of Q. Otacilius Pollinus at Avenches was first published by the local antiquary W. Wavre in 1902.<sup>1</sup> He offered an almost completely satisfactory reconstruction of the opening — so establishing the form of the text, which honours Pollinus and lists his public positions, and, at the same time, the approximate line-length, which is of about 28 letters, occupying a space of 6 metres. He also convincingly juxtaposed a number of other fragments, but without much suggestion as to how they should be related to the whole. His results are now built into a wall in the Museum of Avenches, as shown in the accompanying photograph (table 14).<sup>2</sup>

All attempts to proceed further are hampered by the fact that the fragments are set in hard cement — their backs and edges are invisible, so that it is impossible to tell whether M. Wavre had more evidence than is apparent for some of his less immediately convincing juxtapositions, and hard to consider and test new ones (though to some extent this problem can be overcome by cutting models of each fragment from an enlarged photograph and using them as the elements of a jigsaw puzzle), while traces of letters on the edges of fragments are sometimes obscured. It is not surprising that only one serious attempt at advance has been made; but that is the very important one of Professor Alföldi<sup>3</sup> whose major deduction was that the text associates Pollinus with the corporation of *negotiatores Cisalpini et Transalpini*. I think that I have one useful point to add on the layout of the inscription; a point that necessitates modification of Professor Alföldi's proposals and that has led me to offer, very tentatively, a series of highly conjectural supplements to the text; but I must record, at the outset, my very considerable debt to his article.

My point arises from the fact that the panel on which the inscription was cut was composite, consisting of blocks arranged in two adjoining and parallel columns, each block being, so far as the evidence goes, about 3 metres wide and 0.90 high. The text was inscribed after the blocks had been assembled and ignored their edges; now that the components are broken and separated, parts of letters that overlapped one or more blocks appear to have been truncated or sliced along edges that are absolutely straight. Obviously fragments showing the straight edges of the component blocks can only be placed in a limited number of positions in the reconstructed whole. Wavre was certainly aware of the horizontal edges and used them in making his reconstruction. He seems to have missed the full significance of the vertical ones which, as appears from ll. 1 and 2, were all from a single line that ran down the text in the position of a central axis. Their presence on a number of fragments enables us, I think, to place them, with confidence, in relation to the centre.

<sup>1</sup> In *Schweiz. Anz. n.s.* 4 (1902/3) p. 140, supplemented in the following years and finally concluded in *Pro Aventico* IX (1907) p. 46 f. His results are, in effect, simply reproduced in *CIL* XIII, 11480 and in E. Howald and E. Meyer, *Die römische Schweiz* (Zurich, 1940) no. 212.

<sup>2</sup> Taken by Mr. G. Th. Schwarz to whom my thanks are due. He also took the photographs from which I cut the models described below, using for the purpose a grant from the Swiss Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique.

<sup>3</sup> A. Alföldi, *Ur-Schweiz* XVI (1952) p. 3 f., whence *AE* 1952, no. 205.

In figures I and II (table 15), I have drawn out the two substantial sections of the text that survive (adding the accepted and certain supplements to damaged letters and words), so as to show their relation both to the horizontal lines that run across them and to the vertical line that forms the central axis. It would be desirable, if possible, to establish also the total number of lines in the complete text. I think it in fact very probable that the two sections overlapped — i.e. that the first *N* on the righthand side of I, l. 4, is identical with the *N* which is all that survives of II, l. 1; it is, at least, a notable coincidence that the two sections both carry parts of the letter *N* in what I calculate to be the same relation to the central axis. But if that is wrong, an unknown, but odd, number of lines is lost in the middle. Something is also lost at the bottom, but this is less serious to the interpretation of the text.

In section I, I have for the most part accepted Wavre's reconstruction, with the following reserves and exceptions:

I. 1: at the right end I have assumed that the letters extended for one space beyond those of l. 2, as they do at the beginning of this line.

I. 3: if Wavre is right to place here the fragment with which he completes the lower part of the first *I* of *immunitate*, it seems to me that it contains also the tail of an *R* just visible to the left of the base of the upright; at the right end of the line, it seems to me that Wavre crowded the letters in order to fit in the fragment with *EM* with which he completes the word *immunitatem* and that these letters are in any case fractionally smaller than the rest in this line — I prefer therefore *immunitate* which is suggested by the attested phrase *immunitate donato* (or its near equivalent *honorato*).

I. 4: the first and third circular letters might be *Q* as well as *O*; the fragment with *S* towards the end of the line cannot be regarded as quite certainly placed here and was, indeed, rejected by Professor Alföldi; but I have retained it provisionally, for it is sliced horizontally just like the other letters of this line and may make a join in depth.

II. 4/5: Wavre completed the lower part of *IN* in l. 4 with a fragment that carries *VT* in the line below; this may be right, but I can see no compelling reason for placing it here, and have rejected it provisionally.

The first two and a half lines present no problem. After that Wavre left a number of gaps and Professor Alföldi suggested the extremely attractive possibility:

. . . tam immunitatem  
quam omnes alios honores in quamluri  
bus civitatibus adepto . . .

There are, however objections to the *tam* — there is no trace of the lower serif of the left stroke of the *A* which ought to be visible (cf. the relation of *T* to following *A* twice in l. 1) and I have already suggested some possibility that *R* was the third letter of this word. Moreover it is a little surprising that in an inscription showing such formal beauty of cutting and layout a word should overlap from one line to another — a point that might be raised also against some of Professor Alföldi's proposals for later lines. None of this is conclusive, of course; but it does perhaps suggest that it would be worth looking for an alternative solution.

The most fruitful basis of enquiry seems to me the word *immunitas*. *Immunitas* might be given to individuals, by an emperor in the form of exemption from imperially imposed duties, particularly the duty to pay taxes,<sup>4</sup> by a town council in the form of exemption from civic burdens<sup>5</sup> and by a corporation in the form of exemption from the burdens imposed on members of the association;<sup>6</sup> but I think that we can rule out the last as too parochial for the context. Imperial and municipal *immunitas* might be complete or partial, given in perpetuity or for a restricted time.<sup>7</sup> A man might therefore obtain it on several occasions, and

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *C/L* III. 5232 — donatus . . . immunitate ab divo Augusto.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *C/L* III. 6294 — immunitate munerum publicorum concessa ab ordine coloniae eiusdem.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *ILS* 7212 II. 17 — a sigillis eius temporis quo quinquennalis erit immunitas.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the implications of the qualification in the phrase *immunitas munerum ordinariorum* in *C/L* III. 8088, and the difference between the aeterna immunitas of *C/L* VI. 1474 and the immunitas annorum X in *AE* 1916 no. 42.

epigraphic references to several grants do exist.<sup>8</sup> I have not found a reference to a specific number of grants, but it seems reasonable to conjecture that this text contained one and to propose *ter immunitate donato*.<sup>9</sup> If the grants were made by an emperor, his name must have stood at the beginning of l. 5 — e.g. *a divo* followed by a name of c. eight letters (Hadrian would fit very well); if by the city, by some phrase such as *in colonia sua, ab colonia sua* (*ab ordine* would also make good sense, but hardly gives enough letters before the surviving *O*). I incline to the former because of the existence of two fragments that give *ADIV*<sup>10</sup> with the bases of an upright and a *V* which could well be part of the *PV* of *apud* above.

If the grant of *immunitas* was made by an emperor, it looks as though the list has proceeded to extra-municipal affairs and the next item might be an office in the imperial administration; if Wavre's final *S* in l. 4 is rejected, *in quinque decuriis* or a variant of that title would be appropriate enough. Less grandly, Pollinus may have been *quinquennalis* in a town other than Aventicum, whose name will then have occupied the space at the beginning of l. 5. Another possibility, to me much more attractive, is that he held an office connected with the *Concilium Galliae*; and if Wavre's *S* is retained *inquisitori Galliarum* is an easy supplement.<sup>11</sup> I would like, in fact, to suggest a refinement on it, for which I admit that there is absolutely no attestation. As Professor Alföldi pointed out, one of Wavre's unattached fragments carries a figure — parts of two upright strokes survive and of a superscript bar from which it can be deduced that there was at least one more stroke to the right to be covered; on the same fragment, above the remains of the figure, are the lower part of an *A* and a fraction of the letter to the right of it which included an upright stroke with a rightwards extension whose precise character is not ascertainable — *B, D, E, or L* — and these letters are sliced horizontally in the same way as are the attested letters of l. 4. I think that I would like to offer the guess that here we have the beginnings of ll. 4,5, with the first letters of *a divo* (or *ab*) in l. 4 and *III Galliarum* in l. 5, Pollinus' title being in the form *inquisitor III Galliarum*.

In section II the importance of the vertical line as a central axis is immediately apparent and dictates the relationship of the groups of fragments one to another in a helpful way. I note the following points of detail over which I have diverged from Wavre or from Professor Alföldi:

l. 2: the first letter is indubitably *N* as restored by Wavre — the upright stroke, which is all that survives, has no lower serif and can only be the right upright of an *N* — so that Professor Alföldi's suggestion *socio venalicii* must be rejected; there is a clear stop between the *O* and the *V*.

l. 3: I have followed Professor Alföldi in placing here the fragments with *NORVM* in order to give the word *Transalpinorum*, and it is now apparent that this takes us to the line-end; I have added a fragment which he left unallocated with *PI* sliced horizontally in the manner of letters in this line, but I have rejected the fragment with which Wavre completed the left side of the *N* of *NORVM* since it gives an untypically narrow letter.

l. 4: the *L* restored by Wavre before *ICOR* is certainly to be rejected (it is patent, on close inspection, that there is insufficient room for the transverse stroke) and, partly for reasons of spacing, partly of linguistic possibility, I believe that the letter here must have been *N*. Unfortunately this conclusion excludes Professor Alföldi's restoration *Vindellicorum* and the supplements that followed therefrom. On the other hand, so far as can be judged without moving the stones, the pieces with *DANI* (wrongly restored by Wavre as *DANT*) make a perfect join with those that carry *NICOR*, the *N* filling out and confirming my conjecture and the *I* fitting into the fractured shaft of the stroke to the right, while in the line below the top of *C* or *G* below *NI* is completed by the tip of a letter just visible to the left of *A*; moreover the *D* seems to make a nearly perfect join with the bowled letter visible below *I* on the fragment with *PI* which I have added to l. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *CIL* II. 2129 — *compluribus immunitatibus . . . a principibus honoratus*.

<sup>9</sup> There is insufficient room for *honoratus*.

<sup>10</sup> The letters are sliced horizontally in the same manner as the attested letters of this line.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *ILS* 7018.

l. 5: the lower serif of a letter, perhaps *I*, can just be seen to the right of *AR*; if the fragments with *DANI* are rightly placed in l. 4 we have the tips of a number of letters here below them — an upright which, from the small size of the serif, is probably the right upright of *M* or *N*, followed by *E* or *F*, by a rather broad letter with a left upright (perhaps *R*), by *C* or *G*, by *A* and by a circular letter which Wavre restored as *O* but which must be *Q* for there is a stop after it and the letter group *AO* at the end of a word, even of an abbreviated one, is hardly admissible; this is, of course, at the end of the line, and since the one fragment that certainly comes from the right margin carries a *Q* as the last letter of a line, I have thought it reasonable to use it to complete the *Q* here — as far as I can judge the stones in fact make a perfect junction — and this gives an *A* as the last letter of the next line.

Further supplements have to be considered within this framework. In l. 2 the word ending *NO* is very likely to be *patrono* and the word beginning *VENA* should, as Professor Alföldi suggested, be connected with *venalicius*; since there is no longer any reason for introducing the word *socius*, the reference is more probably to slave-dealers — *venalicii* — than to the tax on slave sales as he suggested; the obvious supplement would be *patrono venalicioorum*. There is no evidence that I know for a corporation of slave-dealers, though it is not improbable that one existed — and we do know of the operations of slave-dealing in this area from the dedication left in the temple of Jupiter Poeninus on the Great St. Bernard Pass by the Helvetian *mango*, C. Domitius Carassounus.<sup>12</sup> L. 3 is to be filled with the names of the *Cisalpini et Transalpini*, as so convincingly argued by Professor Alföldi, and it would accord with other references to their *patroni* that their names should be preceded by the word *corpus*, for which there is space in l. 2 if *venalicioorum* is lightly abbreviated. The result seems to be:

. . . patrono venalicio(um) corp(or)is  
Cisalpinorum et Transalpinorum

This suggests that the *venalicii* were a section of the group of *negotiatores Cisalpini et Transalpini* and confines Pollinus' patronate to this section; and I do not find that a wholly satisfactory solution. By abbreviating *venalicioorum* more heavily it would be possible to make room for *et* before *corpus*, but the heavier abbreviation is not in the style of the man who drafted this text and there are other difficulties.<sup>13</sup> I leave the problem open.

The fragments that I have added to l. 4 on archaeological grounds impose the restoration *Rhodanicor(um)* in the second half of the line and so a reference to the *nautae Ararici et Rhodanici* which will also fill the first half.<sup>14</sup> In this context it is natural to think that the letters *AR* in l. 5 must be from the name of the one corporation known to have had a station at Aventicum, the *nautae Aruranci Aramici*;<sup>15</sup> but their introduction is incompatible with the letters that I have added at the end of this line. Since the *Aruranci Aramici* must, therefore, be presumed absent from the text we cannot be too confident in deducing that Pollinus' connexion with the corporations who are mentioned arose because they had stations at Aventicum; it is perfectly possible that he made contact with them elsewhere, and if he was *inquisitor Galliarum* very probable indeed that he made it at Lugdunum during his term of office there.

The new letters at the end of l. 5 are, as far as I can see, to be explained only as *ergaq(ue)*, which indicates that in this line we have passed from the list of Pollinus' clients to an account of the reasons given for honouring him with an inscription, one of which has already been stated. Too few elements survive to show more than the general lines of the formulation, but it must have been something like:

ob adfectionem rarissimam ergaq(ue)  
singulos universosque merita

<sup>12</sup> *ILS* 4851.

<sup>13</sup> Thus one might expect the word *corpus* before *venalicioorum*, and after it a geographic term to tie the group to a particular place or area.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *CIL* XIII. 1695.

<sup>15</sup> *CIL* XIII. 5096.

Then there will have come a statement that the beneficiaries (the *cives* or the *ordo* of Aventicum, or perhaps the *Helvetii* as a whole) <sup>16</sup> had ordered the erection of the monument, and may be that there was some entertainment provided by Pollinus or his family at its dedication. In this connexion it is worth recalling that we possess part of the transcription onto stone of a formal decree authorizing the construction of a *schola . . . cum inscribtione meritorum Otacilii Pollini*.<sup>17</sup>

My very tentative and conjectural reconstruction is printed below and drawn out in plate 16. I am very well aware how much of it is a matter of hazardous guessing, though for some of the details I feel an accession of confidence from the fact that, as the drawing shows, I have found places among them for nearly all of Wavre's unattached fragments. I must, however, stress that my intention is simply to provide a basis for further discussion. When others have seen the snags that I have missed and suggested improvements that I have not thought of, we may hope for a real approximation to the text of a most interesting document.

Q(uinto) Otacilio Quir(ina tribu) Pollino Q(uinti) Otacil[ii]  
 Ceriali[s] filio omnibus honoribu[s]  
 [apud] suo[s funct]o t[er] immunit[ate]  
 [a div]o [Hadriano d]on[ato] inqu[i]s[itori]  
 5 [(trium) Galliar(um) patro]no vena[licior(um) corp(oris)]  
 [Cisalpinorum et] Transalpinorum  
 [item nautar(um) Arari]cor(um) [Rho]danicor(um)  
 [ob adfectionem r]ar[issimam] ergaq(ue)  
 [singulos uni]verso[sque merit]a  
 10 [Helvetii publice poni iusserunt]  
 [...]

<sup>16</sup> On my drawing I have shown two fragments which, if placed here, would give Helvetii at the beginning of l. 10.

<sup>17</sup> *CIL* XIII. 5106.

