
Paul Bidwell and Elizabeth Hartley with Simon Corcoran

CONSTANTINE AT YORK¹

Introduction

In the late summer or early autumn of 305 the emperor Constantius came to Britain for the second time. Ten years earlier, while still Caesar, he had recovered the island from the usurper Allectus, and won for himself and his imperial colleagues the victory title *Britannicus*.² Now he was returning to Britain to campaign against the Picts in the north, having been elevated to the rank of Augustus, following the abdication of Diocletian and Maximian in May 305, and becoming the senior member of the Second Tetrarchy.³ However, as a result of the scheming of his fellow-Augustus Galerius, who had effectively chosen the new Caesars, Constantius was isolated in the imperial college and may already have been showing signs of serious ill-health. His son Constantine had spent over a decade in the east in the entourage of Diocletian, part protégé, part hostage, and then been passed over for the succession. Realizing his political and physical weakness, Constantius must have asked Galerius to send his son back to him not long after their joint proclamation as Augusti in May 305. While Galerius vacillated and plotted, Constantine took decisive action to escape Galerius's court, probably by mid-summer at the latest, and caught up with his father at Gessoriacum (Boulogne), with sufficient time for a campaign in

¹ This paper represents collaboration between Paul Bidwell and Elizabeth Hartley, with further assistance from Simon Corcoran on points of tetrarchic history and chronology. Elizabeth Hartley, who delivered the paper in Niš, would like to thank her hosts for their kindness and generosity. The paper draws on (but modifies and extends) the article by Paul Bidwell, 'Constantius and Constantine at York', in E. Hartley, J. Hawkes, M. Henig and F. Mee (eds.), *Constantine the Great: York's Roman Emperor* (London, 2006), pp. 31-40.

² For the campaign of 296, see *Pan. Lat.* VIII(5) with the commentary in C.E.V. Nixon and B.S. Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (Berkeley &c., 1994), pp. 104-44 and P.J. Casey, *Carausius and Allectus: The British Usurpers* (London, 1994), ch. 10.

³ For the chronology, see T.D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1982), p. 61 and S. Corcoran, 'Chronology', in E. Hartley et al., *Constantine the Great: York's Roman Emperor*, p. 12.

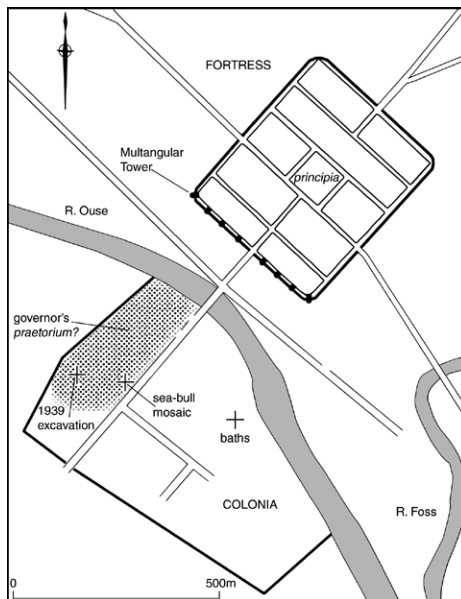


Fig. 1. Map of Roman York showing extent of the fortress and colonia.

Сл. 1 Мапа античког Јорка која приказује величину утврђења и колоније.

northern Britain still to be militarily practicable.⁴ So together again, father and son achieved a great victory over the Picts before the end of the year, for which the two Augusti each assumed the title *Britannicus maximus* for the second time.⁵ Constantius, however, became progressively more ill and died at York the following summer on 25th July 306 (Fig. 1). On his death-bed he handed over his part of the empire to his son Constantine.⁶

⁴ For Constantine reaching Constantius at Boulogne, followed by the joint campaign, see *Origo Constantini* 2.4; cf. *Pan. Lat.* VI(7).7.5. Accounts (Lactantius, Eusebius) which have Constantine only arriving in time to be at his father's death-bed are not reliable on this point. However, much of the rest of Lactantius's account of Constantine at Galerius's court is credible (Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 24.2-8).

⁵ The victory over the Picts must have been won before the end of the 305 campaigning season (presumably late autumn) and is reflected in a praetorian diploma of 7 January 306, when the Augusti are attested as *Britannici Maximi II* (*Athenaeum* n.s. 38 (1960), pp. 7-8 = *AE* 1961.240, revised in M.M. Roxan, *Roman Military Diplomas 1954-1977* (Institute of Archaeology Occasional Publications 2; London, 1978), no. 78, now also *Supplementa Italica* n.s. 16 (Rome, 1998), Regio VII no. 50).

⁶ For Constantius handing over the empire to Constantine, see Eusebius, *De Vita Constantini* I.21.2; cf. *Pan. Lat.* VII(6).5.3 and VI(7).2.4. For the death of Constantius and Constantine's accession, see A. Cameron, 'Constantius and Constantine: an exercise in publicity', in E. Hartley et al., *Constantine the Great: York's Roman Emperor*, pp. 18-30; also T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge MA and London, 1981), pp. 27-9 and D.S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay, AD180-395* (London and New York, 2004), pp. 342-6. The key role in Constantine's succession attributed in one source (*Epitome de Caesaribus* 41.3) to an Alamannic king, Crocus, is unlikely to be true: thus I. Wood, 'The Crocus conundrum', in E. Hartley et al. (eds.), *Constantine the Great*, pp. 77-84; cf. J.F. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome 213-496: Caracalla to Clovis* (Oxford, 2007), p. 146 (less sceptical but still cautious). Between appointment by his father and recognition by Galerius, Constantine can hardly be considered a usurper, although the issue of legitimacy remains a key

A panegyrist refers to a formal entrance into a palace after Constantine's acclamation and Eusebius has Constantine emerging from the palace clad in his dead father's purple.⁷ It is doubtful whether there was ever a purpose-built imperial palace at York and the ancient sources probably refer to a pre-existing building taken over by the emperor, which was probably the governor's residence.⁸ Its location has hitherto been uncertain, but, as in other one-legion provinces, it was probably outside the fortress.

The governor's residence

Many building remains have been recorded north-west of the main road through the *colonia* which leads to the *porta praetoria* of the fortress.⁹ The area may have had a frontage overlooking the river and overall would have covered about 6 hectares. Discoveries in the area include a small apsed room with a fine mosaic showing a bull with fish tail and further south of this a range of rooms with three mosaics.¹⁰

The largest structure was a hypocausted room with an apse at its south-west end. It was found in excavation in 1939 and thought to be part of a large bath-house (Fig. 2).¹¹ The apsidal room was almost 8m in width and its south-west end closed in an apse with external buttresses. The interior of the room had a hypocaust. The room now appears to be part of a residential complex, rather than part of a bath-house. It is perhaps a hall or *aula*, which would be expected in the residence of a high official of the later empire. *Aulae* at Trier and Savaria had hypocausts and buttressed walls because of their great height, as did the *aula* at Gamzigrad.¹²

Finds that might support the identification of the apsidal structure in York as part of the governor's residence are two silvered bronze tablets recovered in the area in 1840. They are inscribed with dedications in Greek, one to Ocean and Tethys and the other to the deities of the governor's headquarters.¹³ The text of the latter has been translated as follows:

theme of both ancient and modern accounts. See discussions by T.D. Barnes, 'Christentum und dynastische Politik (300-325)', in F. Paschoud and J. Szidat (eds.), *Usurpationen in der Spätantike* (Historia Einzelschriften 111; Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 99-109 and most recently M. Humphries, 'From usurper to emperor: the politics of legitimation in the age of Constantine', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1 (2008), pp. 82-100.

⁷ *Pan. Lat.* VI(7).4.1 and Eusebius, *De Vita Constantini* I.22.1.

⁸ See R. Haensch, *Capita provinciarum: Statthaltersitze und Provinzialverwaltung in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz, 1997), pp. 127-8.

⁹ Royal Commission for Historic Monuments (England), *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York 1: Eboracum, Roman York* (London, 1962) [= RCHMY 1], figure on p. 50.

¹⁰ These are respectively monuments 34d, 31, 32, 34a-c at RCHMY 1, p. 50.

¹¹ RCHMY 1, p. 50, monument 34d.

¹² E.M. Wightman, *Roman Trier and the Treveri* (London, 1970), pp. 103-9; P. Scherrer, 'Savaria', in M.S. Kos and P. Scherrer (eds.), *The Autonomous Towns of Noricum and Pannonia* (Situla 41; Ljubljana, 2003), p. 65; E. Mayer, *Rom is dort wo der Kaiser ist* (Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Monographien 53; Mainz, 2003), pp. 80-8.

¹³ R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain* (rev. ed.

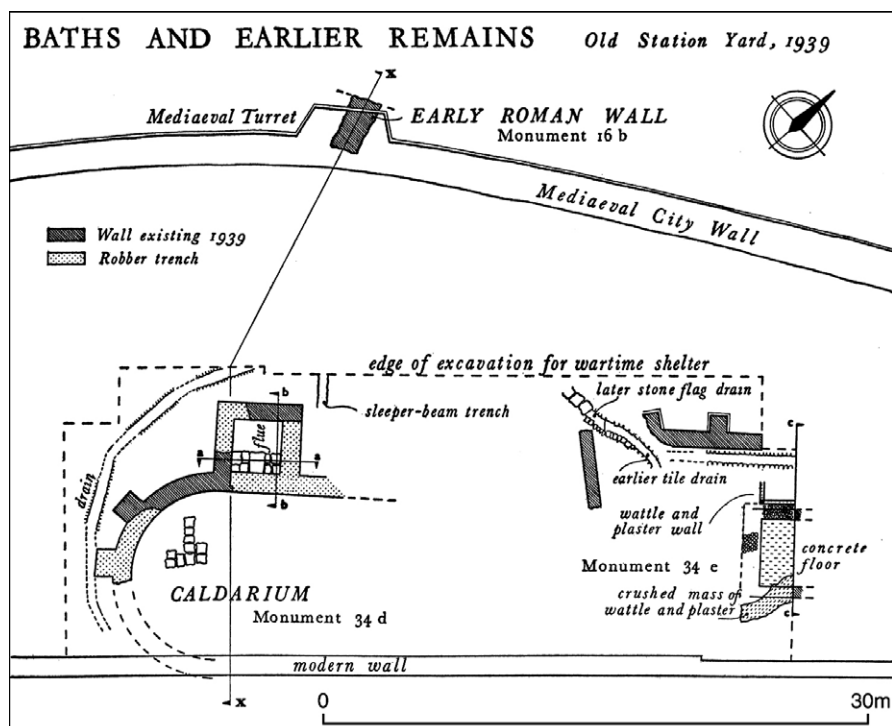


Fig. 2. Structures excavated in 1939, possibly part of the governor's praetorium.

Сл. 2 Грађевине ископане 1939. године, могуће - део гувернеровог преторијума.

'To the deities of the governor's headquarters, Scribonius Demetrius (set this up).'

Thus if these are the remains of the governor's residence, then they are very probably also the remains of the 'palatium' of Constantius and Constantine.

Principia

One of the most significant developments in the late Roman fortress at York was the rebuilding of the *principia*.¹⁴ It retained its original plan, but many of the walls were rebuilt from their foundations and the original columns which separated the nave and aisles of the basilica were re-erected, at least one of its column drums in the wrong order. The dating evidence for the rebuilding was sparse and 'inconclusive' and any connection between the rebuilding and the presence of Constantius and Constantine can only be assumed.¹⁵

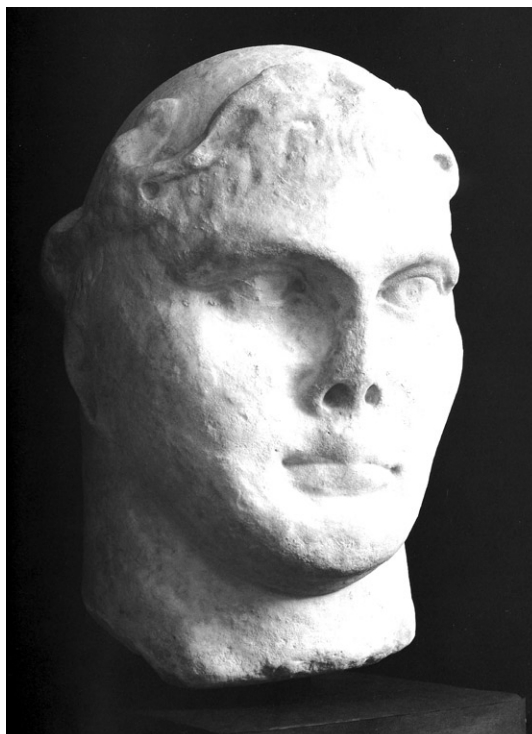
Stroud, 1995), nos. 662-3, pp. 222 and 770-1; and E. Birley, 'The Roman inscriptions of York', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 61 (1966), pp. 731-2.

¹⁴ D. Phillips and B. Heywood, *Excavations at York Minster 1: From Roman Fortress to Norman Cathedral* (London, 1995), pp. 47-56.

¹⁵ Phillips and Heywood, *Excavations at York Minster, Part 1*, p. 47. The dating

Fig. 3. Marble head of Constantine, height 420mm, found at Stonegate, York, before 1823.

Сл. 3 Мермерна глава Константина, висине 420mm, пронађена у Стоунгејту, Јорк,



When the rebuilding was completed or perhaps some years later, some part of the *principia* was adorned with a more than life-size statue of Constantine (Fig. 3).¹⁶ The restoration of the *principia* at York to its full original size when

evidence for Phase 2 is set out in Part 2 of the same publication and lists without any description the presence of third- and fourth-century pottery in a number of contexts.. A worn coin (5.16/63) of Tetricus I (270/272) was found in room 7, at the south-east end of the rear range, in floor make-up similar to that associated with the Phase 2 reconstruction in the *basilica* (Part 1, p. 56; cf. pls 32-3 for layer XK330 which contained the coin) Make-up for the Phase 2 floor in Room 1, at the opposite end of the rear range, contained fragments of wall-plaster which because of their lack of a highly finished surface are not likely to date to before the third century (Part 2, p. 250).

¹⁶ I.A. Richmond, 'Three fragments of Roman official statues from York, Lincoln, and Silchester', *The Antiquaries Journal* 24 (1944), pp. 1-5; S. Rinaldi-Tufi, *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani. Great Britain 1 3: Yorkshire* (Oxford, 1983), no. 38 and Catalogue no. 9 in E. Hartley *et al.* (eds.), *Constantine the Great*, pp. 120-1; and most especially M. Bergmann's catalogue entry for the head in A. Demandt and J. Engemann (eds.), *Imperator Caesar Flavius Constantinus/ Konstantin der Grosse* (Trier and Mainz, 2007), Catalogue no. I.8.6 (on CD-ROM). Although not entirely typical for a head of Constantine, probably because from early in his reign, style, workmanship and context make the conclusion likely. Bergmann points out that the head, as was common in this period, is reworked from an earlier statue (Hercules?), discernable particularly around the ears, and from the differential weathering, with some of the hair 'fresher' from recarving. For general discussion of contemporary portrait sculpture, see M. Bergmann, 'Bildnisse der Tetrarchenzeit' and N. Hanestad, 'Die Porträtskulptur zur Zeit Konstantins des Grossen', both in Demandt/ Engemann, *Imperator Caesar Flavius Constantinus*, pp. 58-71 and 96-116.

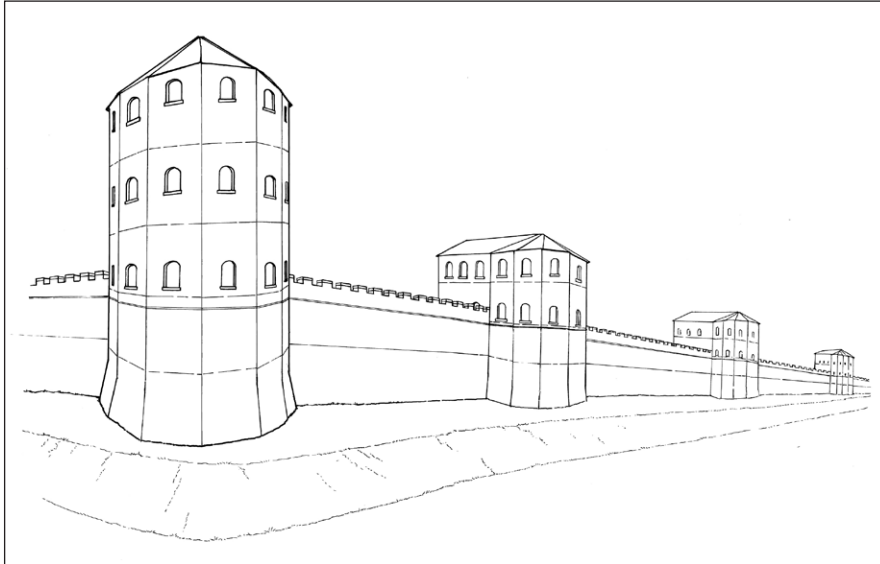


Fig. 4. Reconstruction of the south-west wall and towers of the fortress at York.

Сл. 4 Реконструкција југозападнoг зида и кула утврђења у Јорку.

the status and size of legions was much reduced is remarkable. Nevertheless there is a parallel at the long-established fortress at Novae in Moesia Inferior (in modern Bulgaria).¹⁷

Multangular Tower

Projecting towers were added to the defences of many fortresses on the Rhine and Danube frontiers, but none matches the towers on the south-west front at York in their scale and elaboration. Six towers 9.4m in width with six-sided fronts projected from the curtain-wall between the *porta praetoria* and the angle towers (Fig. 4). Entirely exceptional are the two multangular towers at the angles. They measure 13.7m across and had large rectangular extensions which ran back across the area behind the fortress wall. The interval towers also had rectangular extensions at their backs.¹⁸ Projecting interval towers with

¹⁷ T. Sarnowski, 'Die Principia von Novae im späten 4. und früher 5. Jh.', in G. von Bülow and A. Milceva (eds.), *Der Limes an der unteren Donau von Diokletian bis Heraklios* (Sofia, 1999), pp. 56-63.

¹⁸ RCHMY 1 (n. 9 above), pp. 13-25; I.A. Richmond, 'Introduction: the Roman legionary fortress and city at York', in RCHMY 1, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv; R.M. Butler, 'The defences of the fourth-century fortress at York', in R.M. Butler (ed.), *Soldier and Civilian in Roman Yorkshire* (Leicester, 1971), pp. 97-106; A.B. Sumpter and S. Coll, *Interval Tower SW5 and the South-West Defences: Excavations 1972-75* (The Archaeology of York 3: The Legionary Fortress ii; London, 1977); P. Ottaway, *Excavations and Observations on the Defences and Adjacent Sites 1971-90* (The Archaeology of York 3: The Legionary Fortress iii; York, 1996), pp. 279-87.

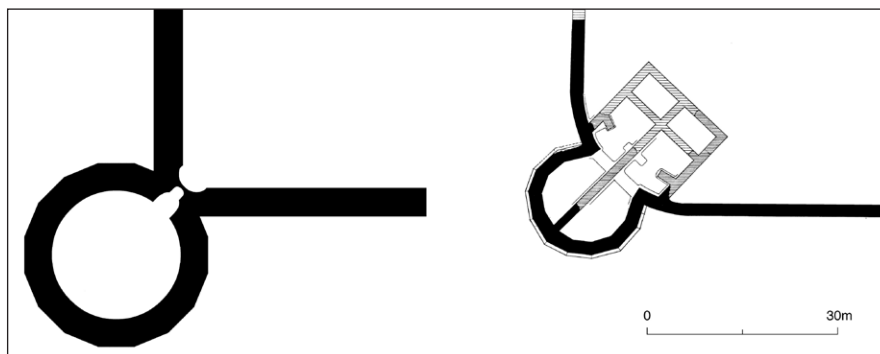


Fig. 5. Plans of the multangular corner towers at Gamzigrad (left) and York (right).

Сл.5 Планови вишеугаоних кула на угловима у Гамзиграду (лево) и Јорку (десно).

polygonal fronts occur at a number of towns and forts in Britain, for example, at Cardiff, Cirencester and Caerwent, where they date to the late third or fourth century. There are fewer examples beyond Britain.¹⁹ What distinguishes the interval towers at York from these other polygonal towers is their larger size and their slightly more elaborate design (their fronts are six-sided rather than five-sided).

Until the extraordinary complex at Gamzigrad was revealed,²⁰ the angle towers in York were entirely without parallel. Apart from some minor differences the plans of the angle towers at York and Gamzigrad are very similar and they might have been designed by the same architect (Fig. 5). The walled complex at Gamzigrad was built as an imperial residence for the Emperor Galerius and the huge towers were built between 303 and 305.²¹ The angle towers at

¹⁹ J. Lander, *Roman Stone Fortifications: Variation and Change from the First Century A.D. to the Fourth* (BAR International series S206; Oxford, 1984), pp. 244-6.

²⁰ For general accounts of Gamzigrad and the discoveries there, see D. Srejić (ed.), *Roman Imperial Towns and Palaces in Serbia* (Belgrade, 1993), pp. 28-53 and 118-63; D. Srejić and Č. Vasić, *Imperial Mausolea and Consecration Memorials in Felix Romuliana (Gamzigrad, East Serbia)* (Belgrade, 1994) and 'Emperor Galerius's buildings in Romuliana (Gamzigrad, Eastern Serbia)', *Antiquité Tardive* 2 (1994), pp. 123-41; M. Živić, *Felix Romuliana: 50 Years of Solving* (Zaječar, 2003); M. Vasić, 'Felix Romuliana (Gamzigrad): Palast und Gedenkmonument des Kaisers Galerius', in U. Brandl and M. Vasić (eds.), *Roms Erbe auf dem Balkan: Spätantike Kaiservillen und Stadtanlagen in Serbien* (Mainz, 2007), pp. 33-53.

²¹ The first fortification circuit at Gamzigrad seems to belong shortly before 300, presumably in the aftermath of the great Persian victory of 297/8. The second more monumental phase was begun not long after. Brick-stamps show involvement in construction by detachments of the *Legio V Macedonica* from their Danube bases (D.N. Christodoulou, 'Galerius, Gamzigrad, and the Fifth Macedonian legion,' *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 15 (2002), pp. 275-81). The east gate was presumably finished by the second half of 306, as it was adorned with pilasters decorated with the busts of six emperors: i.e. four reigning tetrarchs plus two retired Augusti. Coin evidence shows that at least one tower as well as some internal palace buildings were still being constructed towards the end of Galerius's reign (308-311). For the dating, see Srejić, *Roman Imperial Towns and Palaces in Serbia*, pp. 50-1 and 119-27; Č. Vasić, 'Chronological relations of the palace and fortification system of Gamzigrad', in D. Srejić (ed.), *The Age of the Tetrarchs* (Belgrade, 1995), pp. 313-23;

Gamzigrad were 28.35m across and sixteen-sided whereas the angle towers at York were based on a fourteen-sided figure, four sides were omitted where they were attached to the wall.²²

It is unlikely that it will ever be possible to date the construction of the York towers as closely as those at Gamzigrad but the links between the emperors Galerius, Constantius and Constantine and the strong organisation of the Roman Empire under the Tetrarchs adds to the likelihood that the towers at York were constructed at a similar time, by imperial decree, as at Gamzigrad.

The renovations of the *principia* and the newly built south-west front of the fortress with multangular towers at York might also have been to do with the creation of a new command for the army in Britain, a post of great importance, which was probably established in York under Constantine. The post was later known as the *dux Britanniarum*.²³

Пол Бидвел и Елизабет Хартли са Сајмон Коркоран

КОНСТАНТИН У ЈОРКУ

У јесен 305. године, цар Констанције дошао је у Британију по други пут. Десет година раније, повратио је ово острво од узурпатора Алектуса; овај пут ишао је у ратни поход против Пикта у северној Британији а пратио га је његов син Константин. Након што је однео велику победу, Констанције је преминуо у Јорку, 25. јула 306. године, а војска је акламацијом прогласила Константина за његовог наследника. Панегиричар се позива на свечан улазак у палату након Константиновог проглашења и Еусебијус приказује Константина како се појављује из палате одевен у царску пурпурну одору свог мртвог оца. Неизвесно је да ли је у Јорку икада постојала наменски саграђена царска палата и антички извори се вероватно позивају на претходно постојећу грађевину коју је цар преузео, а која је вероватно била гувернерова резиденција. Њена локација до сада није била сигурна, али, као и у другим једно-легијским провинцијама, вероватно се налазила ван утврђења.

Многобројни остаци грађевина забележени су северо-западно од главног пута кроз колонију који води до *porta praetoria* самог утврђења. Највећа грађевина била је

M. Vasić, 'Felix Romuliana', in Brandl/Vasić, *Roms Erbe auf dem Balkan*, pp. 49-52. For the pilasters, see D. Srejić, 'The representations of Tetrarchs in Romuliana', *Antiquité Tardive* 2 (1994) pp. 143-152 and M. Živić in A. Demandt and J. Engemann (eds.), *Imperator Caesar Flavius Constantinus/Konstantin der Grosse* (Trier and Mainz, 2007) Catalogue no. I.4.12.

²² At Gamzigrad, aside from the four sixteen-sided towers, the remaining towers were either twelve or ten-sided. Note that at the closely contemporary (but not so monumental) site nearby at Šarkamen (usually associated with Maximinus Daza and his mother, Galerius's sister), the towers were only octagonal. See D. Srejić *et al.*, 'Šarkamen tetrarchial imperial palace', *Starinar* 47 (1996), pp. 231-43; M. Vasić and M. Tomović, 'Šarkamen (East Serbia): an imperial residence and memorial complex of the Tetrarchic period,' *Germania* 83 (2005), pp. 257-307; and I. Popović, 'Šarkamen: Eine Residenz- und Begräbnisstätte aus der Zeit des Maximinus Daia', in Brandl/Vasić, *Roms Erbe auf dem Balkan*, pp. 80-95.

²³ I.A. Richmond, 'Introduction: the Roman legionary fortress and city at York', in RCHMY 1 (n. 9 above), pp. xxxiii-xxxiv; A.R. Birley, *The Roman Government of Britain* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 401-2.

просторија са хипокаустом и апсидом у југозападном делу, која је откривена 1939. године приликом изградње склоништа за случај ваздушних напада, заједно са остацима других зграда, укључујући и део једне друге апсидне просторије која се загревала. Изгледа да су ове две просторије са хипокаустом биле део резиденцијалног комплекса пре него део великог купатила, и вероватно су представљале две дворане са хипокаустом или ауле, што се може очекивати када су у питању резиденције високих званичника познијег царства. Налази који би могли да поткрепе идентификацију апсидних грађевина као део гувернеровог *преторијума* (*praetorium*) јесу две посребрене бронзане плоче које су откривене у близини. На њима су натписи на грчком, један посвећен Океану и Тетису а други божанствима гувернеровог седишта.

Једно од најважнијих дешавања у касно античком утврђењу у Јорку била је поновна изградња *принципије* (*principia*). Задржала је свој основни план али су многи зидови поново изграђени из темеља а оригинални стубови, који су одвајали брод и бочне лађе базилике, поново су саграђени, са ширим проредима, а макар у једном су ваљци стубова погрешно поређани. Докази о времену датирања поновне изградње били су оскудни. Засигурно је утврђен период касног III или раног IV века али било каква повезаност времена поновне изградње и Констанцијевог и Константиновог присуства може се само претпоставити. Неки делови *принципије* (*principia*) били су украшени Константиновим кипом већим него у природној величини.

Истурене куле додаване су одбрани многих утврђења на границама Рине и Дунава, али се ни једна, по размерама и обради, не поклапа са кулама на југозападној фасади у Јорку. Шест кула ширине 9,4m са шестостраним фронтovima који штрче из бедема између *порта преторије* (*porta praetoria*) и угаоних кула. Посебно су изузетне две вишеугаоне куле на угловима. Оне су мериле 13,7m попречно и имале су велике правоугаоне продужетке који су се протезали уназад, преко дела иза зидова утврђења. Куле у међупросторима такође су имале правоугаоне продужетке у свом задњем делу. Истурене куле у међупросторима са полигоналним фронтovima јављају се у многим градовима и утврђењима у Британији, на пример у Кардифу, Сиренсестеру и Карвенту, где датирају из касног III или IV века. Има ређих примера изван Британије. Оно по чему се куле у међупросторима у Јорку разликују од осталих оваквих полигоних кула јесте што су веће по величини и мало су сложенијег облика (њихови фронтови су пре шестострани него петострани). Све до открића изузетног комплекса у Гамзиграду, ове угаоне куле се нису могле ни са чим поредити. Осим неких малих разлика, грађевински планови кула у Јорку и Гамзиграду су врло слични и можда их је израдио један исти архитекта.

