

SOME VITELLIAN DATES: AN EXERCISE IN METHODOLOGY

C. L. MURISON

University of Western Ontario

A.D. 69 was one of the most violent and troubled years in the history of the Augustan principate.¹ In contrast to the periods immediately before and after, the ancient sources for the “Year of the Four Emperors” are fairly copious; however, the utmost caution is necessary in their interpretation, because the rapid succession of Emperors, the accompanying political and ideological shifts and re-alignments, and the ultimate triumph of the Flavian party have all served to encrust our extant accounts with a heavy layer of propaganda,² not all of which is either unsubtle or easily detectable.

One technique which can be used to check the intrinsic probability or otherwise of our historical data is the rather prosaic calculation and measurement of time and distance. For example, there are obvious practical and physical limitations in moving, say, an army from one place to another and if, in examining our sources, we find that these limits are breached, we can then be reasonably sure that we are dealing either with error or with deliberate falsification. Furthermore, this technique can even be used to *create* new data which, in turn, shed fresh light on our picture of a given series of events; this was recently accomplished in exemplary fashion by Kenneth Wellesley,³ who demonstrated that it was on about 3rd

¹Although the only full-length account of the period A.D. 68–70 in English until recently was B. W. Henderson's idiosyncratic *Civil War and Rebellion in the Roman Empire*, published in 1908, scholarly neglect or indifference has not been as great as this might suggest. There has always been a steady trickle of research work in the learned journals, with occasional surges; for example, a recent fascicle of *Historia* (24.1 [1975]) contained *two* papers on the revolt of Vindex; also in 1975 two popular book-length accounts of the period were published—P. A. L. Greenhalgh's *The Year of the Four Emperors* and Kenneth Wellesley's *The Long Year A.D. 69*.

²The Flavians, as the ultimate victors, are naturally the most obvious target for suspicion. See, especially, A. Briessmann, *Tacitus und das flavische Geschichtsbild* (*Hermes Einzelschriften* 10 [1955]), and J. Nicols, *Vespasian and the Partes Flavianae* (*Historia Einzelschriften* 28 [1978]).

³K. Wellesley, “A Major Crux in Tacitus: *Histories* II, 40,” *JRS* 61 (1971) 28–51, esp. 41–45.

March, A.D. 69, that the Emperor Otho sent from Rome to the legions of the Danubian provinces the order summoning them to Italy to help face the invasion of Vitellius' generals Caecina and Valens. In the two notes which follow I shall use this technique to demonstrate, firstly, how an "official version" (i.e., propaganda) has survived in our accounts of the outbreak of Vitellius' revolt in Germany in January, 69; and secondly, how its use can enable us to detect an error which has occurred in a recent attempt to calculate exactly the date of Vitellius' arrival in Rome later the same year.

Our main concerns, then, are the speed of armies on the march and the rate of travel of dispatch carriers using the facilities of the official post.⁴ There seems nowadays to be a *communis opinio* that during the late Republic and early Principate the daily marching average of the Roman legions on a regular basis (*iustum iter*) was about 15 *milia passuum*, while a forced march (*longum iter*), sustainable for periods of a few days only, produced an average of about 20 *mp* per day.⁵ With regard to messengers bearing official dispatches, the distance usually covered in a day appears to have been about 50 *mp*; under the press of an extreme emergency, however, this total could be doubled or almost tripled,⁶ though this was achieved not by the messenger going appreciably faster but simply by his spending many more hours each day on the road.

THE OUTBREAK OF THE VITELLIAN REVOLT

The revolt of the legions in the military districts of Upper and Lower Germany had its origins in the events which led to the acknowledgement by

⁴It should be remembered that the messenger travelled the entire distance along with the message he was carrying and that he did not ride but was conveyed as a passenger in a carriage from stage to stage (see, above all, Suet. *Aug.* 49.3); hence the name *vehiculatio* applied to this service during the Augustan principate; our currently popular term *cursus publicus* is not attested until the fourth century (cf. S. Mitchell, *JRS* 66 [1976] 106–31, esp. 112).

⁵Cf. K. Wellesley (above, note 3) 41; M. Grant, *The Army of the Caesars* (London 1974) xxix; for detailed discussion, see W. Riepl, *Das Nachrichtenwesen des Altertums* (Leipzig/Berlin 1913; repr. Hildesheim 1972) 129–36; G. Veith, *ap. Kromayer-Veith, Heerwesen und Kriegführung der Griechen und Römer* (München 1928; repr. 1963) 353–55, makes the sensible point that the *distance* of a day's march was probably not as important as the *time* it took: over difficult country or bad roads or among mountains what might normally be considered a *iustum iter* could easily become a *longum iter*; the figures given in the text are, therefore, averages only.

⁶There is no need to assume a daily average greater than 125–140 *mp* for any attested journey by an official messenger: a messenger sent from Trier to Rome, for example, in January, A.D. 69, (Tac. *Histories* 1.12.1, 14.1, 18.1–2, 55.1–4; hereafter the *Histories* will be cited simply as *H.* with no author designation) took at most 8 days to cover a distance of c. 950–980 *mp*, depending on the route followed. See further, H. F. Stobbe, *Philologus* 30 (1870) 374–91; W. Riepl (above, note 5) 209–35, esp. 222–24; A. M. Ramsay, *JRS* 15 (1925)

the Senate of Ser. Sulpicius Galba as Emperor in June, 68. Galba, governor of Hispania Tarraconensis, had made his bid for power as a result of a revolt in Gaul launched by C. Iulius Vindex, governor of Gallia Lugdunensis, in March of that year. Although legions from both German armies had crushed that revolt at the battle of Vesontio, Galba's friends in Rome managed to suborn the Praetorian Guard, Nero was overthrown and Galba became Emperor.⁷ Both officers and men in Germany felt that somehow they had been cheated, since Galba's accession meant that there were no rewards for crushing the revolt in Gaul, no promotions, and no transfers to the relatively easy and well-paying service in the Praetorian Guard in Rome; instead, L. Verginius Rufus, the much-admired legate of the army of Upper Germany, was recalled⁸ and Fonteius Capito, legate of the army of Lower Germany, was executed in about September or October 68, allegedly for high treason.⁹ Galba seems to have regarded both armies with the gravest suspicion. Furthermore, by late 68 there were two very influential legionary legates, C. Fabius Valens in Lower Germany¹⁰ and A. Caecina Alienus in the Upper district,¹¹ who felt that their services to Galba had been insufficiently appreciated; they seem to have been prime movers in fomenting revolt.

Such was the situation when A. Vitellius arrived in Lower Germany about 1st December, 68, as legate of the army there. Immediately thereafter he flung himself into a busy round of activities: he visited all the legions, inspected prisons and punishment lists, and to some men he restored lost

60–74; and, above all, H.-G. Pflaum, *Essai sur le cursus publicus sous le haut empire romain* (Paris 1940) chap. VIII, “La rapidité du *cursus publicus*.”

⁷Plut. *Galba* 2–7; *H.* 1.4, 8–9, 51; Suet. *Galba* 9–11; Dio 63.22–29.

⁸Verginius may have considered himself a suitable candidate for the Principate (cf. *H.* 1.8.2, *an imperare voluisset dubium*, with *noluisset* as a *varia lectio*); however, he steadfastly refused what he considered to be “unconstitutional” offers of supreme power from troops in 68. Nonetheless, he had frightened Galba badly and was replaced (Plut. *Galba* 10; 22.2).

⁹Galba seems not to have arrived in Rome from Spain until early or even mid-October (cf. *H.* 1.6.1, *tardum Galbae iter et cruentum*), since he did not travel directly to Italy along the Riviera coast of France; instead he made a detour into Gaul (cf. *H.* 1.23.2, where we hear of his Praetorian escort struggling over the Pyrenees and the *Alps*). From Suet. *Galba* 11 it appears that Fonteius Capito was killed while Galba was still on his way to Rome.

¹⁰He commanded the legion I *Germanica* at Bonna; during the revolt against Nero, Valens had acted on Galba's behalf and had sent information to him; he had also been a prime mover in the death of Fonteius Capito (*H.* 1.7.1, 52.3; 3.62.2).

¹¹It is not certain which legion Caecina commanded—perhaps IV *Macedonica* at Moguntiacum (*PIR*² C 99); in 68 as quaestor in Baetica he joined Galba's revolt early and was rewarded with a posting to Upper Germany; however, by late 68 Galba had discovered that he was guilty of peculation and had ordered that he be cashiered (*H.* 1.52.3, 53.1–2).

rank and status.¹² Vitellius' graciousness and kindness made the strongest impression on the troops and not long after his arrival Tacitus depicts Fabius Valens, the disaffected legionary legate, urging him to make a bid for power (*H.* 1.52.3–4). It seems quite clear that, soon after he took up his post in Lower Germany, Vitellius was working his way towards a revolt against Galba.

However, Tacitus then goes on to give us an account of the actual outbreak of the revolt which must ultimately be based on Vitellian propaganda.¹³ The rebellion began in Upper Germany: the legions there were on friendly terms with the neighbouring tribes, the Treviri and the Lingones, who had suffered at Galba's hands for having opposed him during the revolt of Vindex and who were bitterly hostile to him. Trouble began when Galba's new governor in Upper Germany, Hordeonius Flaccus, ordered envoys from these tribes to leave the military base at Moguntiacum. Shortly afterwards, on 1st January, 69, the men of the two legions at Moguntiacum (IV *Macedonica* and XXII *Primigenia*) tore down the images of Galba and refused to take the customary oath of loyalty to the Emperor; instead, they swore allegiance to the Senate and People and sent a message to Rome demanding a new Emperor. In Lower Germany on the same day the legions I *Germanica* at Bonna and V *Alaudae* at Vetera stoned Galba's images; all four legions of Lower Germany, however, did renew their oath to Galba. Not long after nightfall on 1st January a messenger from Moguntiacum arrived at Vitellius' headquarters (a journey to Colonia Agrippinensis of 113 *mp*) and informed him of what had happened that morning. According to Tacitus (*H.* 1.56.2–3), this brought matters to a head for Vitellius: he and his partisans had either to attack the army of Upper Germany or else join it in revolt. We are then told that Vitellius and his advisers decided to see if the army of Upper Germany would accept Vitellius as Emperor. (The implication is that the events at Moguntiacum came as a complete surprise.) The next day Fabius Valens arrived in Colonia from Bonna and took the lead in actually hailing Vitellius as Emperor. The legions of Lower Germany then vied with each other in doing the same thing and on 3rd January the legions of Upper Germany abandoned their oath to *SPQR* and "came over" to Vitellius; the civilian population of the areas near the military bases, including, of course, the dissident Treviri and Lingones, joined in enthusiastically.

This story of "spontaneous" actions happening in widely separated places is complete fiction; the various moves seem to have been planned for

¹²*H.* 1.52.1; Suet. *Vit.* 7.3–8.1.

¹³*H.* 1.12.1, 53.3–57.2; cf. Plut. *Galba* 22 and Suet. *Galba* 16.2; *Vit.* 8.1–2.

some time and it is clear that their actual occurrence was carefully orchestrated.¹⁴ This can most easily be seen from the speed with which events followed thereafter (*H.* 1.59.2–61.2): several provincial governors quickly swore allegiance to Vitellius—D. Valerius Asiaticus in Gallia Belgica, Junius Blaesus in Gallia Lugdunensis (along with the legion I *Italica* and other troops stationed at Lugdunum), Trebellius Maximus and the army of Britain (three legions), and the governor of Raetia with his auxiliary forces. This gave Vitellius great military strength—eleven legions plus *auxilia*, so that he was able to plan his military offensive against Galba in Italy on a fairly elaborate scale. Two invasion columns were prepared and sent off: Fabius Valens led one from Lower Germany with orders to advance southwards through Gaul as far as Vienna—to overawe all the Gallic provinces and to destroy any opposition—and then to invade Italy over the Cottian Alps (by the pass of Mt. Genève), while Caecina Alienus was to advance from Upper Germany through Switzerland and invade Italy via the Pennine Alps (over the Great St. Bernard Pass). The essential point here is that, given the undoubted enthusiasm for revolt among the German legions, Vitellius can *not* have started getting the troops out of their winter quarters and ready for their long march towards Italy until he was quite certain that the legions of Britain were with him; for if they had remained loyal to Galba, his position in Germany would have been very dangerous, and if he had started his preparations for the invasion of Italy and had then turned his troops around to face an invasion from Britain or, worse, if he had had to recall them after they had departed southwards, his whole enterprise might well have fallen apart.

Moreover, the date of departure from Colonia Agrippinensis of the invasion column headed by Fabius Valens can be calculated. Valens had reached the territory of the Leuci, whose capital was Tullum, when he heard that Galba had been murdered in Rome on 15th January and replaced by Otho (*H.* 1.64.1): word of this will have been sent to Germany at top speed since Otho was seeking recognition as Emperor and could argue that the Praetorian Guard had carried out the demand made by the legions at Moguntiacum.¹⁵ Since news of the initial disturbance there on 1st January had travelled to Augusta Trevirorum and from there to Rome in,

¹⁴It is instructive to compare with this Tacitus' account of the outbreak of the Flavian revolt against Vitellius later in 69 (*H.* 2.73–81): there the preliminary meetings are clearly laid out, followed by the "spontaneous outbreak" in Egypt on July 1st and the rapid adhesion of other areas.

¹⁵*H.* 1.12.1; cf. Suet. *Galba* 16.2: *dispicere imperatorem in Hispania factum; eligerent ipsi (sc. Praetoriani) quem cuncti exercitus comprobarent.*

at most, just over eight days,¹⁶ we are entitled to assume that Otho's message will have taken about the same time, or only a little longer to reach Tullum (on the main road from Rome through Gaul to Lower Germany),¹⁷ i.e., by about 24–26th January, at the latest. Tullum is, however, 202 *mp* from Colonia Agrippinensis, Valens' starting point.¹⁸ Moreover, Valens' march was slow and bloody; for example, there had been a massacre at Divodurum among the Mediomatrici in which about 4,000 people were killed (*H.* 1.63.1). Accordingly, even if we allow Valens a normal marching rate of 15 *mp*, which may be somewhat too rapid, he will have left Colonia, at the latest, on 12–13th January.

Can we really believe that Vitellius made his bid for power, received news of support from places as far away as Britain and Raetia, and *then* arranged his command structure, getting his legions out of winter quarters and fully equipped for their march and a winter campaign, all within the space of ten days or so? A more detailed examination of affairs in Britain may help us to answer this question.

At the beginning of 69 there were three legions in the province: II *Augusta* at Glevum (Gloucester); XX *Valeria Victrix* at Viroconium (Wroxeter); and IX *Hispana* at Lindum (Lincoln).¹⁹ The governor, M. Trebellius Maximus, was on bad terms with his legionary legates, especially M. Roscius Coelius, who commanded XX *Valeria Victrix*: the result was an almost total breakdown of discipline within the legions; the governor's authority disintegrated and he was forced to flee to Vitellius (*H.* 1.60). This means that there was no question of Vitellius' simply sending an emissary to Londinium to obtain the adherence of Trebellius Maximus;

¹⁶Above, note 6; Pompeius Propinquus, procurator of Gallia Belgica, had sent from Trier a dispatch containing news of the events of 1st January only (*H.* 1.12.1); receipt of this message prompted Galba to announce his adoption of Piso early on 10th January (*H.* 1.18.1): this message must therefore have arrived in Rome by the evening of 9th January at the latest.

¹⁷Colonia must have been the final destination of Otho's messenger, since news of Vitellius' involvement in the German revolt had reached Rome before Galba's death (*H.* 1.50.1). It is not improbable that this messenger was carrying one of the attested offers of a peaceful settlement which Otho and Vitellius made to each other (*H.* 1.74.1; Suet. *Otho* 8.1; cf. *H.* 1.19.2).

¹⁸My calculations are based on K. Miller, *Itineraria Romana* (Stuttgart 1916; repr. Rome 1964) 77–80, where the distances are given in *leugae* (1 *leuga* = 1.5 *mp*).

¹⁹See Ritterling, *RE* XII s.v. "Legio," 1459–60, 1667, 1772–73; S. S. Frere, *Britannia* (London 1967) 93, 99. These legionary bases represent the advanced positions of the main Julio-Claudian thrusts towards the West, N. Wales, and the North; there were certainly military roads radiating from London more or less directly towards them. By 69 also the Foss Way was in existence, running roughly S.W. to N.E. and representing the boundary of Roman occupation at the time of the first consolidation after the Claudian invasion (Frere 75–76).

each and every legion will have had to be approached separately. However, the distances involved are considerable: Colonia to Gesoriacum (Boulogne) is 245 *mp*;²⁰ Rutupiae (Richborough) to Londinium is 71 *mp*;²¹ Londinium to Glevum is 116 *mp*; Londinium to Viroconium is 158 *mp*; and Londinium to Lindum is 139 *mp*. But assuming that Vitellius sent a single messenger to all the bases in Britain,²² we obtain the following: Londinium to Glevum—116 *mp*; Glevum to Viroconium (via Corinium, Venonae, and Letocetum)—149 *mp*; Viroconium to Lindum (via Letocetum, Manduessedum, and Ratae)—124 *mp*; Lindum to Londinium—139 *mp*, a total round trip from Londinium of 528 *mp*. Combining this with the distance Colonia–Londinium, Londinium–Colonia, we have a total journey of 1160 *mp* plus two channel crossings. Travelling at top speed (c. 130 *mp*/day) a messenger would take about nine days for the land journey; and if we allow one day for the channel crossings (probably dependent on the uncertainties of wind and tide), we have a total time of approximately ten days for the entire trip. Accordingly, if the messenger left for Britain on 2nd January, he is unlikely to have been back in Colonia until 12th January—probably just in time to witness the departure of the invasion column headed by Fabius Valens!

We should note that this timetable presupposes virtually no rest for the messenger and no time for persuasion, speech-making, and debate or discussion among the various units in different parts of Britain. It therefore looks very much as if any journey undertaken by a messenger in January, 69, was strictly *pro forma*: the messenger was expected and meetings with troops in the various legionary bases were merely “for the record.” More probably, of course, there was no such journey; the thing was simply *theoretically* possible.

²⁰K. Miller (above, note 18) 59–61.

²¹Durovernum (Canterbury) was the main road centre in E. Kent and there were roads leading to it from Dubris (Dover) and Lemanis (Lympne) as well as from Rutupiae from an early date. However, Rutupiae was the main military stores depôt in Britain until the Domitianic period (see J. Wachter, *The Towns of Roman Britain* [London 1975] 26, 87) and it is reasonable to assume that Rutupiae was the main port for communications in 69; at any rate, the distances from all three ports to London are very similar. Distances quoted here within Britain are based on the Ordnance Survey *Map of Roman Britain* and on I. D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain* (London 1973), from which statute miles are converted to *mp* (1 *mp* = 1618 yards).

²²This is probably a justified assumption, since the men of each legion would wish to know what their colleagues in the other legions thought of the call to revolt and if a separate messenger was sent to each unit, consultations between the legions would cause considerable delays, and so the time saved by the reduction in the overall distance each would have to travel (the round trips from Colonia would be 864 *mp* to Glevum, 948 *mp* to Viroconium and 910 *mp* to Lindum plus, in each case, two Channel crossings) would be lost.

It seems clear that a plot was fomented in Germany much earlier, perhaps as early as September/October, 68 (about the time of the death of Fonteius Capito).²³ We may surmise that the prime movers were Valens and Caecina and that neighbouring governors had been sounded out well before 2nd January, 69. As for Vitellius, the fact that he came to head this rebellion was, in a sense, fortuitous: the plotters obviously needed someone of distinguished background to head their movement. Galba's action in appointing Vitellius to Lower Germany—not because he was a partisan but because he was well-connected, lazy, and, apparently, “safe”—was a godsend to them. Vitellius not only seemed suitable to the plotters (cf. Plut. *Galba* 22.6–8; Tac. *H.* 1.52.4) but he was also prepared to co-operate; once this was clear,²⁴ the dates of “spontaneous outbreaks” and declarations of support could be agreed upon.

THE DATE OF VITELLIUS' ARRIVAL IN ROME

For Vitellius' arrival in Rome the absolute *terminus ante quem* appears to be 18th July, 69, the *dies Alliensis*:

... maximum pontificatum adeptus Vitellius de caerimoniis publicis XV kalendas Augustas edixisset, antiquitus infausto die Cremerensi Alliensique cladibus: adeo omnis humani divinique iuris experts . . . (*H.* 2.91.1)²⁵

The office of Pontifex Maximus could be assumed only at Rome.²⁶ Apart from this, the only indication of date in our literary sources comes at the end of Tacitus' description of the advance of Vitellius' army across Italy: *arvaeque maturis iam frugibus ut hostile solum vastabantur* (*H.* 2.87.2). This is extremely vague and could suggest any time from mid-June to mid-July.²⁷

²³Above, p. 189 and note 9. It should be noted that Tacitus twice suggests that Fonteius was killed because he would not conspire against Galba (*H.* 1.7.2; 3.62.2).

²⁴From Suetonius' account (*Vit.* 7.3) it appears that Vitellius exuded geniality and *bonhomie* even before he reached his headquarters in Colonia. We may perhaps suspect that a representative of the conspirators had met him on the northern side of the Alps, so that he was already fully briefed as to what was going on.

²⁵Suetonius obviously used the same source as Tacitus: *Magis deinde ac magis omni divino humanoque iure neglecto Alliensis die pontificatum maximum cepit* (*Vit.* 11.2). It is not entirely clear just when Vitellius became Pontifex Maximus: Suetonius says 18th July; but Tacitus *need* not mean this, since *adeptus* could refer to an earlier date, though not necessarily so. Mommsen (*Staatsrecht* II³ 1107) accepts 18th July.

²⁶Mommsen, *Staatsrecht* II³ 1106–1107.

²⁷We are certainly not entitled to conclude that Vitellius entered Rome on 17th July simply because Tacitus says that he assumed the title “Augustus” the day after he arrived in the city

Recently A. J. Coale, Jr., has attempted to determine the date of Vitellius' arrival in Rome by wholly different means.²⁸ He starts with Tacitus' remark that Vitellius visited the site of the so-called first battle of Bedriacum *intra quadragesimum pugnae diem* (*H.* 2.70.1). If we accept Ludwig Holzapfel's date for this battle of 14th April, 69,²⁹ Vitellius was on the scene (actually near Cremona)³⁰ by 23rd May and, given the distance he had to travel, since he had advanced only *paucorum dierum iter* from Colonia Agrippinensis when he heard of the victory of his generals and of Otho's suicide (*H.* 2.57.2), he can scarcely have reached Cremona much, if at all, before this date.

Coale then turns to the *Acta Fratrum Arvalium*, where we learn that the Arval Brethren performed certain sacrifices in honour of the birthday anniversary of Vitellius' wife, Galeria Fundana. The text commemorating this celebration is damaged; however, the crucial lines read as follows:

[Isdem c]os. III non. Iu[n.] mag. Vitelli Germanici imp. III, pr]omag. L. Maecio Postumo, [coll. frat]r. Arval. nomine [im]mol. in Capitolio ob nata]lem Galeriae Germanic[i] imp. III A]ug. Iovi b. m. etc.³¹

Iu[must be *Iu[n.]* rather than *Iu[l.]*, because, as Henzen pointed out, there is no room at the beginning of the entry for anything more than [*Isdem c*]os., and we know that new consuls took office on 1st July.³² However, Galeria Fundana is described as the wife *Germanici imp. Aug.* (the restoration *A]ug.* must surely be correct). But Tacitus tells us that Vitellius did not assume the title "Augustus" until the day after he entered Rome (*H.* 2.90). Therefore, at the latest, Vitellius arrived in Rome the day before his wife's birthday.

(*H.* 2.90) and then goes on in the following chapter to mention his assumption of the position of Pontifex Maximus and to comment on the issuance by Vitellius of religious regulations on 18th July; and yet A. Garzetti states this as a fact (*From Tiberius to the Antonines* 219 [English translation only; cf. Italian original 228]), as does R. Hanslik (*RE* Suppl. IX 1720).

²⁸A. J. Coale, Jr., "Dies Alliensis," *TAPA* 102 (1971) 49–58; the substance of his argument is also contained in his thesis *Vitellius Imperator: A Study in the Literary and Numismatic Sources for the Rebellion and Rule of the Emperor Vitellius, A.D. 69* (Diss. Michigan, 1971) 202–206.

²⁹In the brilliant series of papers entitled "Römische Kaiserdaten": this date was worked out in *Klio* 13 (1913) 289–95.

³⁰On the site of the battle see K. Wellesley, *JRS* 61 (1971) 28–51, esp. 49–51.

³¹W. Henzen, *Acta Fratrum Arvalium* (Berlin 1874; repr. 1967) XCV; *CIL* VI 2051, Tab. II, lines 10–12.

³²*H.* 1.77.2 and 2.71.2; Henzen (above, note 31) XCV, note 6; cf. G. B. Townend, "The Consuls of A.D. 69/70," *AJP* 83 (1962) 113–29.

This is extremely neat, but it is simply impossible. There are two basic errors. First, what is III Non. Iun.? It is, obviously, 3rd June; unfortunately when Henzen was preparing his edition of the *AFA* he was still thinking of III Non. Iul. as a possible reading for this passage and that is, of course, 5th July. The result was a serious muddle: in his edition Henzen glossed the text "5 Iun." and a few years later, doubtless without giving the matter any further thought, he added the same gloss to his "filled-out" text in *CIL* VI.³³ Coale too reads III Non. Iun. as 5th June.³⁴ By his argument, then, and with the date corrected, Vitellius must have been in Rome by 2nd June.

This brings us to the second error: if Vitellius reached Cremona on 23rd May and arrived in Rome by 2nd June, he would have had to cover the approximately 373 *mp*³⁵ between the two cities with an army of some 60,000 men (plus numerous camp-followers and hangers-on: *H.* 2.87.1) at a rate of over 37 *mp* per day! Even if we rely on Tacitus' *intra quadragensimum pugnae diem* and try to juggle the date 23rd May somewhat (and given the distance which Vitellius had to cover in that time, there is not much that can be done here),³⁶ we cannot bring the daily marching average below 30 *mp*, and that too is, of course, impossible. To the general misapprehension about III Non. Iun. Coale has, unfortunately, added an error of his own. He describes Vitellius' visit to Cremona as being made "on his way to Bononia," and he then muddles the date of Vitellius' arrival in Bononia (about which we have no information at all) with the date of his arrival in Cremona (c. 23rd May):³⁷ the distance between these two places is about 89 *mp*. He then asserts that Vitellius covered the 294 *mp*

³³Almost incredibly, the same erroneous gloss appears in M. McCrum and A. G. Woodhead, *Select Documents of the Flavian Emperors* (Cambridge 1961) p. 15.

³⁴Coale (above, note 28) 56.

³⁵This figure is approximate because of uncertainty about both the precise route from Cremona to Mutina and the distance. From Rome to Mutina I calculate to be 309 *mp* (using K. Miller's analysis of the figures given in the various Itineraries); Mutina to Cremona is estimated by Miller (*Itineraria Romana* 286) to be c. 63 *mp* and by O. Cuntz (*Itineraria Romana* I [Leipzig 1929] 43) to be c. 64 *mp*.

³⁶Although Vitellius moved at differing speeds and by various modes of transport *after* the news of his generals' victory at Cremona and Otho's suicide reached him (when he had *paucorum dierum iter progressus*, *H.* 2.57.2; perhaps about seventeen days journey from Colonia, at Andematunnum?), the marching speed of the army units which accompanied him will provide a control. Andematunnum is 518 *mp* from Cremona: if word reached Vitellius there of Otho's death by about 20th April, he then had some 33 days in which to reach Cremona by 23rd May. This means that his troops would have had to achieve a marching average very slightly in excess of 15 *mp* per day, but through safe and friendly territory.

³⁷Coale (above, note 28) 55–56.

(from Bononia to Rome)³⁸ in 13 days (to 4th June, the other error). This gives a marching average of 24.5 *mp* per day, which Coale glosses with the phrase “Vitellius was evidently in something of a hurry,” and this, in turn, is accompanied by a footnote accusing Tacitus, who at *H.* 2.87.1 asserts that Vitellius’ progress was slow and self-indulgent, of “literary character assassination”!³⁹ But even 24.5 *mp* per day is quite impossible for an army over the entire distance from Cremona (or Bononia) to Rome.

What, then, are we to make of the information contained in the *Acta* of the Arval Brethren about the sacrifices in honour of the birthday anniversary of *Galeria Germanici imp. Aug.*? In my view, what has happened here is that, although Vitellius is scrupulously *not* called Augustus every other time his name occurs on this stone,⁴⁰ when his wife is mentioned, she is conventionally—and erroneously—referred to as *Galeria . . . Augusti*.⁴¹ This, then, is merely a silly slip in drafting and Vitellius probably did not arrive in Rome until about the end of June, if not later. We should note that Tacitus, more careful about chronology than a casual reading might suggest, describes the outbreak of the Flavian revolt in the East in early July (*H.* 2.74–86) before giving his account of Vitellius’ arrival in the capital (*H.* 2.87–89).

³⁸This figure is obtained from *Itin. Ant.* 124–27 (cf. Miller, *Itineraria Romana* LVIII): the correct figure I calculate to be 284 *mp*.

³⁹Coale (above, note 28) 56 and note 25.

⁴⁰*CIL* VI 2051, Tab. II: for example, at the beginning of the entry for 3rd June it occurs as [*Vitelli*] *G[er]man. imp.* (1.3) and, later on, simply as [*Vitelli*] *imp.* (1.16).

⁴¹Nicols (above, note 2) 71 and note 12 also rejects Coale’s argument and suggests that the title “Augustus” was being generally applied to Vitellius before his arrival in Rome. However, the evidence which he cites for this (*H.* 2.62 and 90) does not seem to me to provide support for any such contention. Furthermore, as we have seen, examination of the *AFA* entry for 3rd June shows that here at least this explanation is inadequate (whatever one’s belief about the date on which the record was actually cut).