

As was the custom at the beginning of every year, annual public vows were made by all magistrates and all priestly colleges for the welfare and safety (*salus*) of the Emperor. Amongst the *collegia* inaugurating the new year with oaths were the Arval Brethren (*fratres aruales*), a highly exclusive priesthood revived by Augustus and centered around the cult of Dea Dia, a goddess of fertility and abundant harvests. On each January 3, they assembled on the Capitoline Hill to pronounce the new vows which were thereafter inscribed on stone and put on display in their sanctuary, a sacred grove located some five Roman miles from Rome, on the road leading to Ostia.

The Brethren performed a number of rites and sacrifices during the year, and especially during the three days of their main festival held in May. They kept a detailed record of their oaths, rituals and sacrifices, year by year and day by day. Some of their annual records have been preserved, and these exceptional series of inscriptions, albeit fragmentary, give information about the annual vows, rites and sacrifices performed by this priesthood. Today, these inscriptions, known as the Acts of the Arval Brethren, are exhibited in the small cloister's ambulatories of the Baths of Diocletian in Rome, and provide a precious glimpse into one aspect of Roman religious practices, spanning over 300 years, from the age of Augustus (21 BC) to that of Diocletian (AD 304).



*The Acts of the Arval Brethren exhibited in the Cloister of Santa Maria degli Angeli at the Baths of Diocletian Museum.*

The Arval brotherhood consisted of twelve members, elected for life from the highest ranks in Rome, and usually included the reigning Emperor as one of them. The Brethren comprised of a master (*magister*), a vice-master (*promagister*), a *flamen*, and a *praetor*, with eight ordinary members attended by servants and chorus boys. The attendance at the annual meetings, as shown by the inscriptions, varied between three and nine members.

The events recorded in AD 120 took place during the second consulship of [Lucius Catilius Severus](#) whom Hadrian had just appointed as ordinary consul (*consul ordinarius*) with Titus Aurelius Fulvus, the future emperor Antoninus Pius as his



*Augustus as Arval*

colleague.



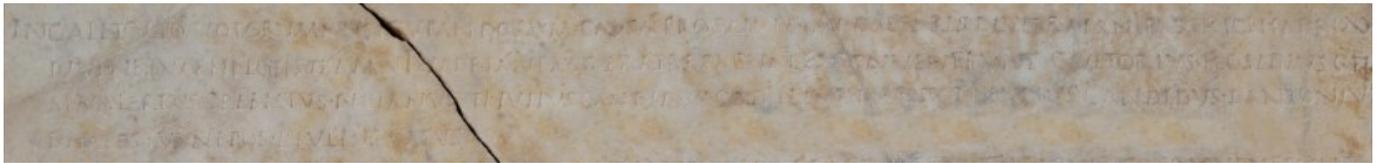
*The Acts of the Arval Brethren of AD 120 (CIL VI 2080) - [click to zoom](#)*

On January 3, the Arval Brethren assembled in Rome on the Capitol Hill to offer vows for the well-being (*pro salute*) of the emperor. The *magister*, the elected leader of the Arval Brethren, was Gaius Vitorius Hosidius Geta. The other members included Marcus Valerius Trebicius Decianus, Tiberius Iulius Candidus Caecilius Simplex, Tiberius Iulius Candidus, [Lucius Antonius Albus](#), [Titus Haterius Nepos](#) and Lucius Iulius Catus.

### **3 January**

L(ucio) Catilio Severo II T(ito) Aurelio Fulvo co(n)s(ulibus) III No[n(as) Ian(uarias)] / in Capitolio

votorum nuncupandorum causa pro salute Imp(eratoris) Caesaris divi Traiani Parthici {Hadrian[i]} [filii] / divi Nervae nepotis Traiani Hadriani Aug(usti) fratres Arvales convenerunt C(aius) Vitorius Hosidius Geta [mag(ister)] / M(arcus) Valerius Trebicius Decianus Ti(berius) Iulius Candidus Caecilius Simplex Ti(berius) Iulius Candidus L(ucius) Antonius [Albus] / T(itus) Haterius Nepos L(ucius) Iulius Catus



CIL VI 2080 - 3 January AD 120 (click to zoom)

Four days later, the *fratres* gathered in the portico of the Temple of Concord in the Roman Forum to proclaim the sacrifice of Dea Dia and announce the dates for the May festival (*indictio*). The fertility rites and sacrifices this year were to held on May 27 at home (*domi*), May 29 in the grove and at home (*luco et domi*), and May 30 at home again.

## 7 January

isdem co(n)s(ulibus) VII Idus Ian(uarias) / in pronao aedis Concordiae ad sacrificium indicendum deae Diae fratres Arvales convenerunt [ibique] / C(aius) Vitorius Hosidius Geta mag(ister) manibus lautis velato capite sub divo culmine contra orientem [cum] / collegi(i)s suis indixit / quod bonum faustum felix fortunatum salutareque sit Imp(eratori) Caesari divi Traiani Parthici filio) divi [Nervae] / nepoti Traiano Hadriano Aug(usto) pont(ifici) max(imo) totique domui eius populo Romano Quiritibus fratribusque / Arvalibus sacrificium deae Diae hoc anno erit ante diem VI K(alendas) lun(ias) domi ante diem VIII K(alendas) lun(ias) in luco et domi / ante diem III K(alendas) lun(ias) domi consummabitur adfuerunt in collegio C(aius) Vitorius Hosidius Geta magist(er) M(arcus) / Valerius Trebicius Decianus Ti(berius) Iulius Candidus Caecilius Simplex Ti(berius) Iulius Candidus L(ucius) Antonius Albus

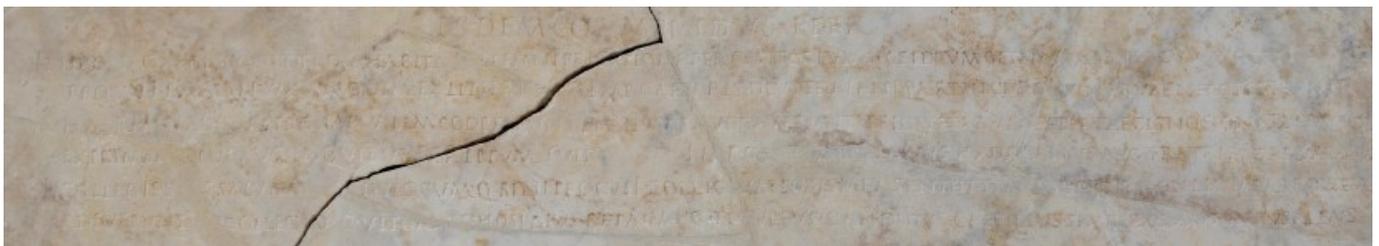


*CIL VI 2080 - 7 January AD 120 (click to zoom)*

On 7 February they had to meet to co-opt a new member to fill the vacancy created by the death of [Bittius Proculus](#). They assembled again in the *pronaos* of the temple of Concord and nominated one Manlius Carbo. The co-optation of the new member took place in accordance with the recommendations contained in a letter from Hadrian sealed with the head of Augustus.

### **7 February**

isdem co(n)s(ulibus) VII Idus Febr(uarias) / in pronao aedis Concordiae habita sollemni precatone per C(aium) Vitorium Hosidium Getam mag(istram) in locum Q(uinti) Bitti / Proculi P(ublium) Manlium Carbonem ex litteris Imp(eratoris) Caesaris divi Traiani Parthici f(ilii) divi Nervae nepotis Traiani / Hadriani Aug(usti) fratrem Arvalem cooptarunt et ad sacra vocaverunt ibique tabulae apertae signo signatae quod / exprimit [ca]put Aug(usti) in quibus scriptum fuit Imp(erator) Ca[e]sar Traianus Hadrianus Aug(ustus) fratribus Arvalibus / collegi(i)s s[ui]s salutem in locum Q(uinti) Bitti Proculi collegam nobis mea sententia coopto P(ublium) Manlium Carbonem / adfuerunt in collegio C(aius) Vitorius Hosidius Geta mag(ister) Ti(berius) Iulius Candidus Caecilius Simplex L(ucius) Antonius Albus / P(ublius) Manlius Ca[rb]o

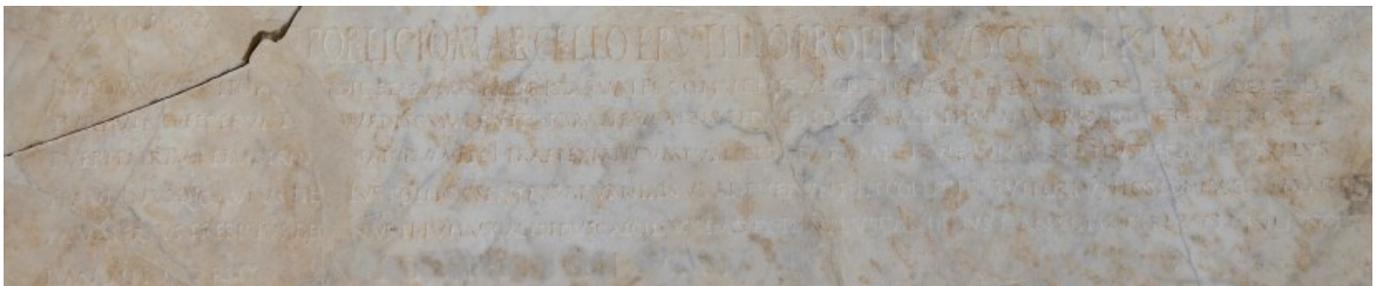


*CIL VI 2080 - 7 February AD 120 (click to zoom)*

On 27 May, the first day of the Dea Dia festival, the Arval priests met in Rome after sunrise in the house of their *magister*, Marcus Valerius Trebicius Decianus, and made offerings of incense and wine to Dea Dia. After these offerings, they gathered for a banquet and changed the toga praetexta in which they had sacrificed for a white dinner-dress.

### 27 May - The record of the first day of the Dea Dia festival

C(aio) Poblicio Marcello L(ucio) Rutilio Propinquo co(n)s(ulibus) VI K(alendas) Iun(ias) / in domum C(ai) Vitori H[o]sidi Getae mag(istri) fratres Aruales convenerunt ibique praetextati sacrificium deae Diae / ture fecerunt [ibi]que discumbentes toralibus albis segmentatis sacrificium ture vino fecerunt quod / pueri patrimi et matrim[i se]natorum fili(i) praetextati cum publicis ad aram rettulerunt C(aius) Staius Cerialis L(ucius) Iulius / Flavianus Q(uintus) Gavius He[lv]ius Pollio C(aius) Sentius Aburnianus adfuerunt in collegio C(aius) Vitorius Hosidius Geta magist(er) / M(arcus) Valerius Trebicius Decianus Ti(berius) Iulius Candidus Caecilius Simplex Ti(berius) Iulius Candidus L(ucius) Antonius Albus L(ucius) Iulius Catus / P(ublius) Manlius Carbo



*CIL VI 2080 - 27 May AD 120 (click to zoom)*

On the second and principal day of the festival, the ceremonies were conducted in the grove of Dea Dia (*luco deae Diae*). The first act was to sacrifice two young pigs (*porcas piaculares*) to purify the grove and ensure the pruning of the woods and the completion of diverse works. Then, they sacrificed a white cow to Dea Dia herself. After the sacrifices were complete, all the members made a libation with incense and wine. Afterwards, they proceeded to the election of the new *magister* (Titus Haterius Nepos) for the ensuing year (from the coming Saturnalia to the next).

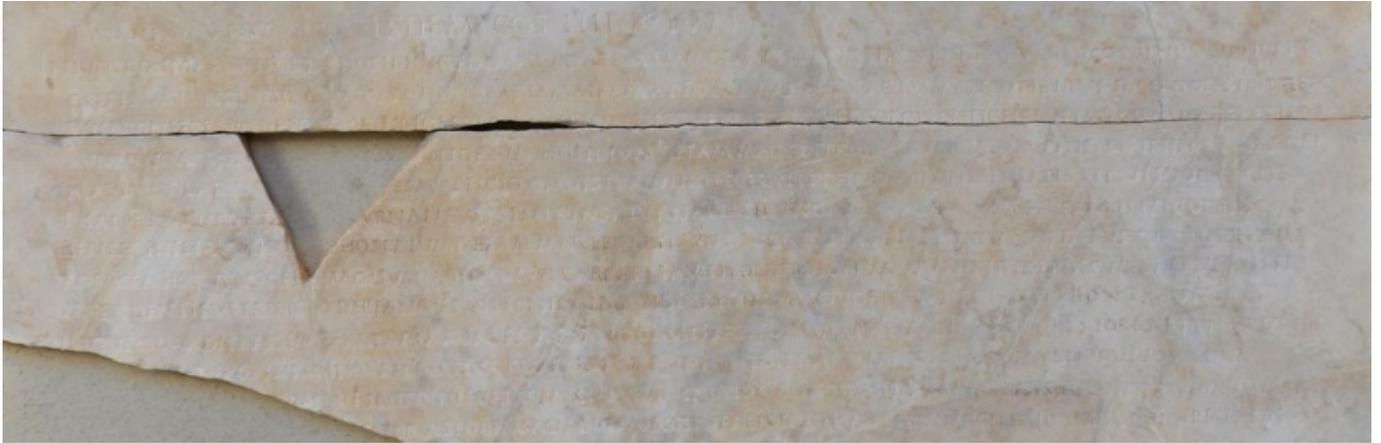
Then they went down to the tetrastyle where, reclining in the dining room, they feasted in the presence of the master. Next came the four-horsed chariots races in the circus of the grove with acrobats specialized in jumping between running horses (*desultores*). During the races, there was a discussion regarding the legitimacy of a *calator* (footman) who had been chosen to replace another one, but who had not paid any membership fee. Bittius Thallus, who had been replaced by Callistratus, demanded the repayment of the see from his substitute. The Arval Brothers decided that the fee-only had to be paid once by any single attendant. Callistratus was, therefore, legitimate and did not owe Thallus any reimbursement.



*Mosaic with  
acrobats, Palazzo  
Farnese*

### **29 May - The record of the second day of the Dea Dia festival**

isdem co(n)s(ulibus) IIII K(alendas) lun(ias) / in luco deae Diae C(aius) Vitorius Hosidius Geta mag(ister) ad aram immolavit porcas piaculares duas luco coinquendo et / operis faciendi ibique vaccam honorariam albam ad foculum deae Diae immolavit ibique sacerdotes in tetras/tylo consederunt et ex sacrificio epulati sunt sumptisque praetextis et coronis spiceis vittatis lucum deae Diae / summoto adscen[derunt et per C(aium)] Vitorium Hosidium Getam mag(istrum) et per L(ucium) Iulium Catum proflaminem agnas opi/mas immolarun[t perfectoque] sacrificio omnes ture vino fecerunt deinde coronis inlatis signisque unctis / T(itum) Haterium Nepotem [ex Sat]urnalibus primis in Saturnalia secunda mag(istrum) annum fecerunt ibique discum/bentes in tetrastylo a[pud C(aium)] Hosidium Getam mag(istrum) epulati sunt post epulas riciniatus soliatu corona pactili / rosacea Hosidius Geta mag(ister) summoto supra carcares ascendit et signum quadrigis et desultoribus misit / praesidentibus Trebicio Deciano et Antonio Albo victores palmis et coronis argenteis honoravit / ibique cum aditi essent fratres Aruales a Bittio Callistrato nomine Bitti Thalli calatoris Bitti Proculi / [petente] ut ei ob introitum redderetur quaerereturque an legitimi calatoris loco habendus esset qui [subs]ti/[tutus in numerum calator]um s[i]ne introitu fuerat placuit cum calator accessio sit sacerdotis semel ob introitum inferri / [debere licet postea alius ca]lator ab eodem sacerdote substitueretur adfuerunt in collegio idem qui VI K(alendas) easdem



CIL VI 2080 - 29 May AD 120 (click to zoom)

On May 30, the third day of the festival, the Arvales celebrated again at the house of the *magister* where the rituals were similar to those offered on the first day.

### 30 May - The record of the third day of the Dea Dia festival

[isdem] co(n)s(ulibus) III K(alendas) Iun(ias) / [in domum C(ai) Vitori Hosidi Getae mag(istri) fra]tres  
Arvales in consummandum sacrum deae Diae conv[enerunt] ibique inter / [cenam C(aius) Vitorius  
Hosidius Geta Trebicius D]jecianus Iulius Candidus Simplex Iulius Candidus An[tonius Al]bus Iulius /  
[Catus Manlius Carbo ture vino feceru]nt ministrantibus pueris patrimis et matrimis sen[atorum fili(i)s  
isdem] / [q]ui VI K(alendas) [easdem et fruges libatas mi]nistrantibus calatoribus pueri riciniati cum  
[publicis ad aram] / [re]ttuler[unt deinde lampadibus in]censis tuscanicas contigerunt quas per  
calatore[s domo sua miserunt] / [ad]fuerun[t in collegio idem q]ui IIII K(alendas) easdem hoc anno  
sportulis cenatum est |(denariis) centenis



CIL VI 2080 - 30 May AD 120 (click to zoom)

Related post: **The Acts of the Arval Brethren of AD 118 (#Hadrian1900)**

Sources:

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