

ART. XVII.—*Hallsteads, Castle Carrcock.* By his Honour
JUDGE STEAVENSON, *with Plan and Description* by
T. H. HODGSON, F.S.A., and MRS. HODGSON.

Read at Carlisle, September 12th, 1907.

TRADITION and the Ordnance Survey said that this was a fort: tradition also said it was prehistoric. There were doubters; there always have been since the time of Thomas. The Ordnance Survey of 1900 said that the fort was 1·264 acres in extent. It is situated on the lowest slope of a hill, one of the northern heights of the Pennine Range, with marsh or bog almost surrounding it, and leaving a somewhat narrow neck communicating with the hills. In front, therefore, it was protected by the bog; arrows and darts could hardly reach it from the solid ground, and a better man than David could not sling a stone so far. It was supposed that when the poor garrison of savages were finally driven out, they could run to their pit dwellings on the slopes behind them, or hide in the impenetrable scrub of oak and thorn that covered the hillside, and there were miles of wild mountain beyond. Is it not a historic fact that the Roman legions were unable to follow the flying Britons into their native forests?

With this in mind, the writer, in September 1904, asked Mr. and Mrs. T. H. Hodgson to make a survey of the site. The plan they kindly supplied is printed opposite, and their description is here appended.

“As shown by the plan and sections, this is a mound of a roughly triangular shape. The top is nearly level, slightly higher towards the west than towards the east, and highest near the middle, but the extreme difference is slight, only about 2·5 feet. The base of the triangle,

about 170 feet in length, faces a little south of west, and here the bank, about 13 feet high, runs down to low ground, where a small stream wanders through damp, peaty soil. The apex, 200 feet from the base, is cut off from the rising ground on the slopes of Castle Carrock Fell by a ditch 3 feet deep, which is continued on the north and south-east sides of the triangle till it runs into the low ground. This ditch can never have held water, the east end being much higher than the west. A low bank on the outer side of the ditch is well marked. On the whole of the south-east side, and on part of the north-east it is surmounted by a hedge, but at the western end of the north side this hedge is almost in the ditch, and there are faint traces of the ditch bank in the adjoining field. There is a small piece of bank outside the west front, but it appears to be only the site of a hedge which, till a short time since, surrounded the earthwork on this side also. At the eastern end the ditch is crossed by a ramp of earth, just wide enough for a cart to pass, and rather lower than the general level of the top of the mound. It leads to a gate through the hedge into the adjoining field, and thence to the fells behind, but there is nothing to indicate whether it is ancient or modern."

In the autumn of 1904 the contractors for the Carlisle water-works began their operations, and it very soon became obvious that Hallsteads "fort" would fall a victim to the pick and shovel of the unsympathetic navy. But the ever watchful antiquary was there, for was not this his chance to find the arrow head of prehistoric man, the stone implement, the short dagger of the Roman legionary, and some, or at least one of the treasures that mother earth stores for the happy, proud, and patient investigator? The engineers were approached. Courteous, thoughtful gentlemen, they heard the antiquary's high hopes, and promised that orders should be given to the men to be most careful and preserve anything unusual, and such their orders were. The men looked and worked,

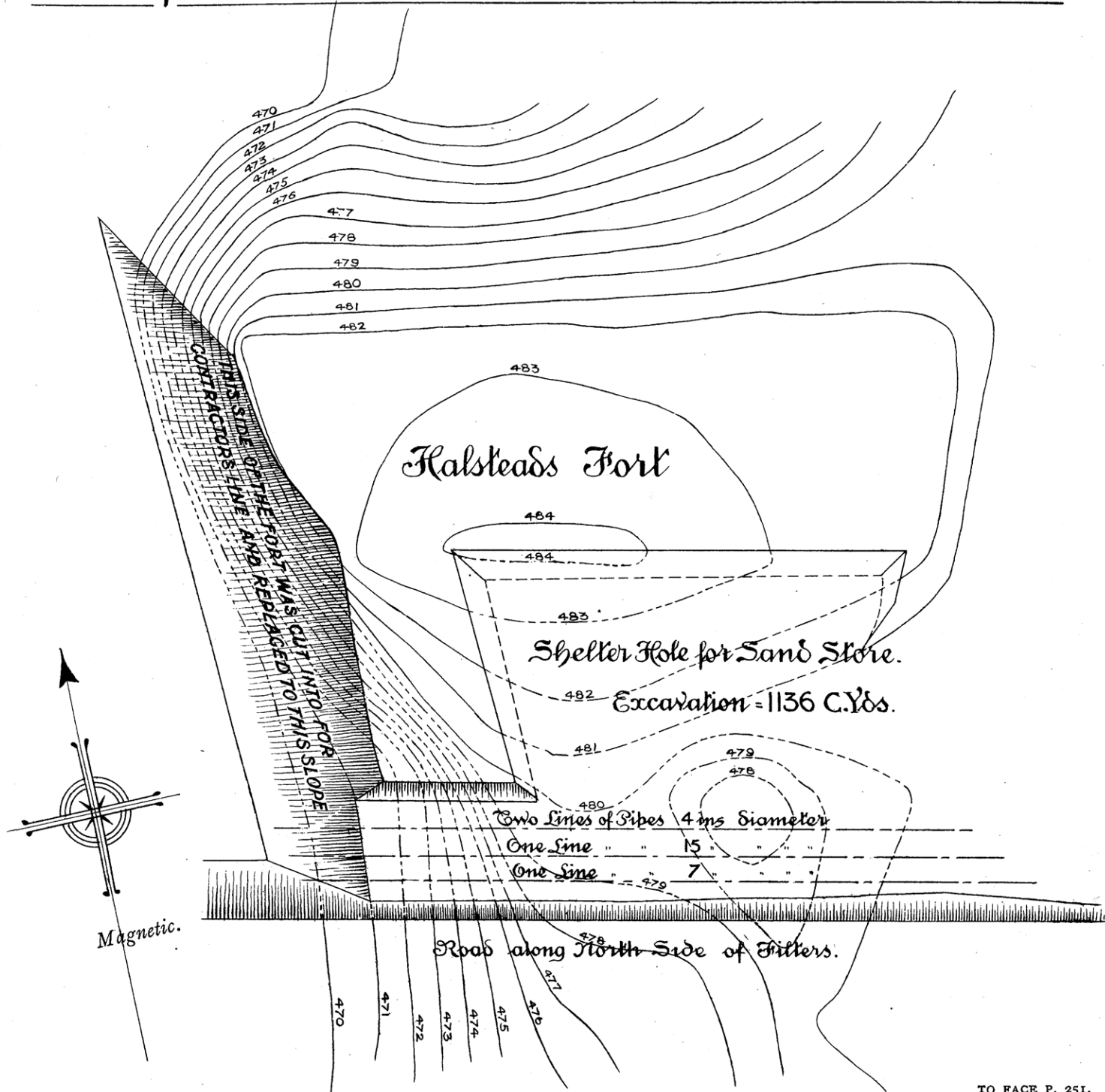


HALLSTEADS, CASTLE CARROCK.

Photo by Mrs. T. H. Hodgson.

TO FACE P. 250.

Plan of Halsteads Fort 1907 with Contours as in 1899.



and looked again, for was there not money to be had? And the antiquary, poor man, many an hour he spent watching in cold, in wet, in storm, and in hope. Opposite will be found an exact plan (most kindly supplied by Mr. A. W. Lewis, the resident engineer of the water-works) of what the pick and shovel did.

Probably more than 2,000 cubic yards of the fort have been removed. Castle Carrock Beck, which flowed at its foot, has been diverted to a new channel further west. The bog all round has been trenched and turned over, or carted away. Large filter-beds have been made hard by; many thousand cubic yards of bog and surface soil have been moved. The antiquary—where was he? He was there, but alas! no arrow heads, no celts, no stone implements, no bronze, no Roman dagger! As the months and years rolled by his heart grew sick, but “*L'ultima che si perde è la speranza*”—hope is the last thing we lose.

The reward came: for one fine day the navy's pick struck a log of oak, black with age and bog. It was found a few yards south-west of the southern angle of the fort, two feet below the surface, and just in the peat, but covered with 18 inches of red clay earth. It measures $29\frac{1}{2}$ inches in circumference, 8 inches thick, very roughly squared, leaving bevelled corners to the section. At one end is a tenon, of which the fragment remaining is $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, originally perhaps a dovetail. The log has been shaped with axe and saw; it might be fancied to have been part of a Roman battering-ram, but was more probably a gatepost to a stockade.

Hallsteads was not an earthwork. The substance of the mound, as the engineers are agreed, was not “made earth.” It had been laid down by water, or possibly by ice. The land in proximity was very carefully examined, but there was no appearance of any excavation out of which material for so large a “fort” could have been taken. Like the clay overlying the log, all the earth

of the site has been carried down the valley by floods, and subsequent floods have hewed the mass into the shape it presented before the water-works were begun. A little refuse, a mere outside coating, has been tipped over the side; and in this outside coating were found two gargoyles which, it is thought, were thrown there when the old church of Castle Carrock was restored in 1828.

Hallsteads, then, may have been a stockade on a natural mound, into which in "the good old days" the farmers of Castle Carrock drove their cattle when "the Scots o' the North came down." A part of the log and the gargoyles are now in the Tullie House Museum.
