

ART. XIII.—*Report of the Excavations at Papcastle, 1912.*
By R. G. COLLINGWOOD, B.A.

Read at the site, June 28th, and at Penrith, September 5th,
1912.

THE Roman fort at Papcastle stands on a hill nearly 300 feet high, overlooking the river Derwent. The south side of this hill is occupied by the village of Papcastle, below which flows the river; the north side falls steeply into a narrow depression, marshy at the bottom and affording a natural defence on this side. Eastward the hill is joined to the higher ground, of which it is a spur, by a neck hardly lower than the summit; and to the west it runs down in a long ridge to the flat ground by the river-side. The position only requires a rampart, thrown across the neck of the spur, to become an easily defensible fort: and its value is increased by strategical facts. Papcastle is not only the site of a ford across the rapid and dangerous Derwent, but it is a good centre for roads up and down the valley, north to Old Carlisle, south-east up the Cocker, and south-west to the south Cumberland coast.

That many of these roads existed in Roman times is certain. The Roman road to Maryport has been plotted by the late Mr. F. L. B. Dykes, of Dovenby (see these *Transactions*, o.s. i., p. 169). That to Old Carlisle is represented for the most part by the modern main road. There must have been one by way of the Derwent valley to Brougham, and there was one or more to Egremont and Ravenglass or to Moresby.

On such a site, and at the junction of so many roads, a station of some importance might be expected. Previous

finds confirm this expectation. Hutchinson (*History of Cumberland*, i., 257) gives an extract of a letter from Mr. Routh, junr., 16th January, 1741/2, referring to the discovery of a pavement and walls in the field between the village and the river now known as Sibby. The pavement was "curiously laid with large flags $\frac{3}{4}$ yd. square and two or three inches thick," upon a "coarse strong cement"; of the walls, two ran east and west, seven yards apart, one of which stood upon the paving and was "secured by a fine red cement two inches thick." A third wall ran at right angles to these. On the paving were found a Samian vase and "a sort of stone trough or rather base of a pillar, about a foot high, the hollowed part square and about two inches deep." The same letter refers to the previous discovery of a drain. On April 15th, 1743, Mr. Routh describes a fibula and a coin of Trajan, found at a considerable depth.

Stukeley describes a "subterraneous vault, floored with large slabs of freestone, found at the S.E. angle" of the fort; also "slates with iron pins in them" and "coins of Claudius Adrian and a silver Geta" between the camp and the river.

Lysons refers to the discovery of coins.

Samian ware and coins have been found in considerable quantities in the village itself at various times, especially in the laying of sewers, gas-mains, etc. The pottery is described by eye-witnesses as having been both plain and figured. The only examples of it seen by myself are a bowl (Dragendorff 27), in the possession of Miss Harris, and two late decorated fragments (Dragendorff 37), in the possession of Mr. Waugh. Of the coins, I was shown ten by Mrs. Dover. They included a denarius of Septimius Severus, a second brass of Trajan and a small brass of Constantius: the others were brasses of small denominations and illegible. These were found, with many others, in the garden of the Mount. More

recently coins were discovered near the south-east angle of the fort, in making a garage. Mr. Waugh has a second brass of Trajan and Mr. Wadham one of Vespasian.

In 1870 a Roman well was found in the garden at Derwent Lodge. It is 2 feet 4 inches in diameter and 25 to 30 feet deep. No remains were found in it, but a quantity of raw clay was lying by the side of it. This was made up into vases in Samian shapes, one of which was shown me by Mr. Harris. The clay of this vase so closely resembles the ordinary Samian fabric that it almost suggests an attempt at making Samian ware on the spot, though this is, of course, highly improbable. But it is certainly not the local clay, and must have been imported.

Samian ware has also been found, associated with blackened grain, in the side of the road running immediately east of the camp between Papcastle and Bellevue. This grain is still to be found at the same spot.

Several inscriptions are known from Papcastle. One, now in the garden at Lindenside in the possession of Miss Harris, is given in the *Lapidarium Septentrionale* (No. 908) as DIVICTORINI (centuria Juli Victorini), but seems to read rather VIVICTORINI. The inscription is not fragmentary, so that it cannot read, e.g., FLA]VI VICTORINI; there is a blank space before the first letter, and there has never been more than one line of letters. The first two letters of the name may possibly have been repeated by mistake. Two other inscriptions (*Lapid.*, 906, 907, Hübner *C.I.L.* vii., 84, 90) date from the reign of Gordianus, in the years 241 and 242 A.D. These inscriptions seem to fix the name of the site as Aballava or Aballaba. The former spelling is supported by the Rudge Cup, the latter by the Notitia. The Ravenna Cosmography has Avalaria. It is suggested that the name is from the Gaelic *Abhall*, Welsh *Afal*, apple, from which several places in Ireland are named;

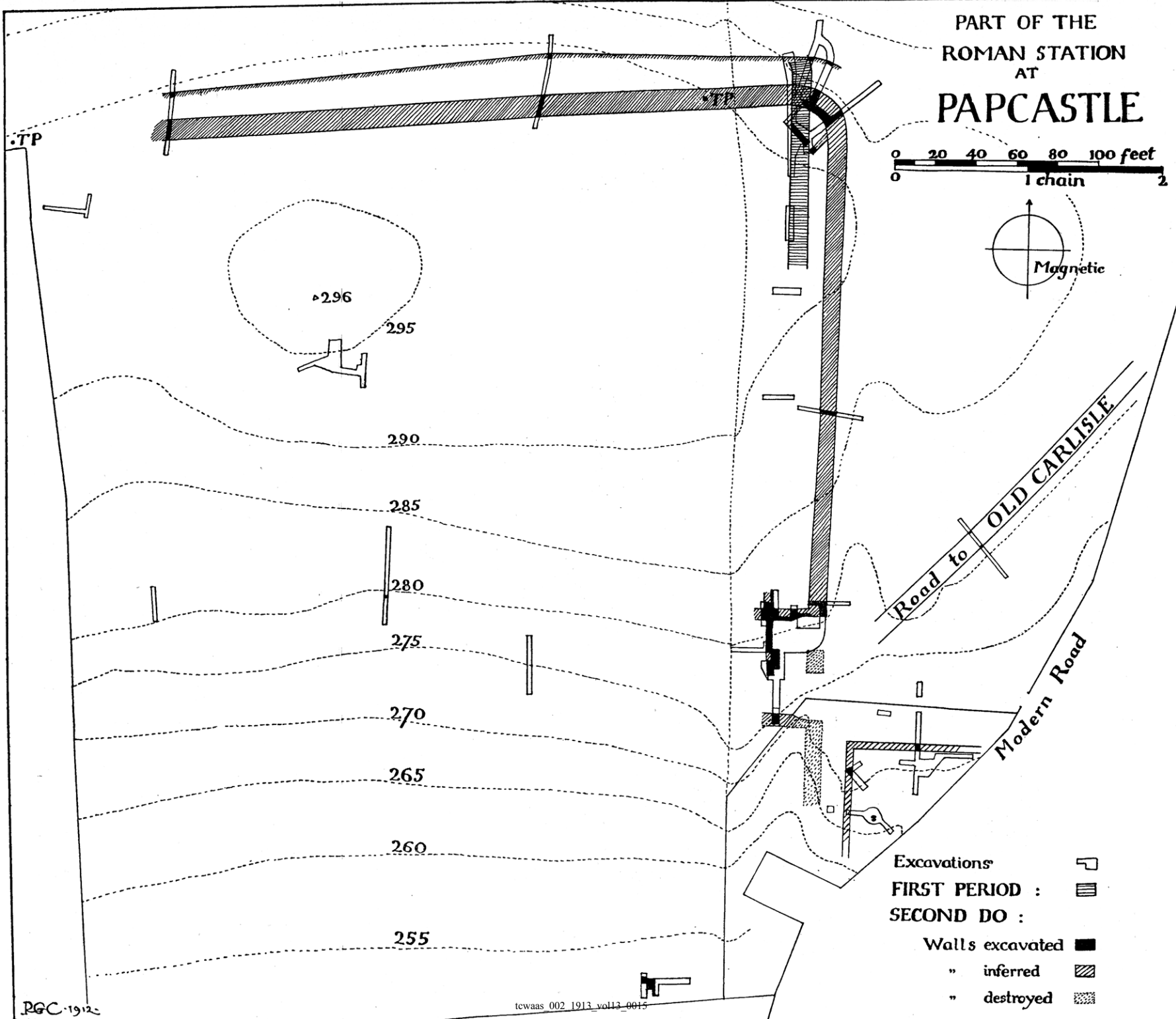
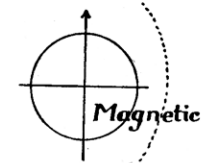
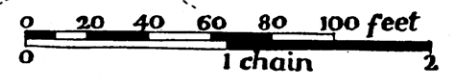
compare Appleby (which Camden thought was the Roman Aballava), Appleshwaite, Avalon, etc.







Of other finds the only ones I have been able to trace are the bronze statuette described by the late Chancellor Ferguson in *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, n.s. vii., p. 267, and a clay lamp found recently with coins and a pavement near the west side of the fort.

From these discoveries it was long evident that Roman Papcastle was more than a mere fort. The remains extend from the top to the bottom of the hill and cover a large area. But the greater part of this area is now built over, and it is impossible to explore it methodically. The only portions at present accessible are the fields above and below the village, the former containing the station itself or a part of it, the latter, as we know from the finds recorded by Hutchinson, various other buildings. We have seen that very few discoveries, if any, had been made within the ramparts of the fort: and accordingly it was decided in 1912 to dig in the field above the village. The Council of this Society appointed a committee consisting of the owner, Mr. H. B. Dykes of Dovenby, Col. Edwin Jackson, and Mr. J. H. Martindale, F.R.I.B.A. The excavation was directed by the present writer, assisted by Miss U. M. Collingwood. From four to seven men were employed, and the expenses of the work, which lasted a fortnight, were defrayed by the Research Fund.

The primary object of the excavation was to fix the limits of the camp. On the east, the line of rampart and ditch is well marked across the neck of the hill. These were trenched through, and were found to be much disturbed by a surface-drain in the ditch and by the complete removal of facing-stones from the wall, of which the rubble alone remained. The drain was in the bottom of the ditch, and no objects were found there; but its section could be clearly traced in the stiff yellow clay which forms the subsoil.

PART OF THE
ROMAN STATION
AT
PAPCASTLE



- Excavations 
- FIRST PERIOD : 
- SECOND DO : 
- Walls excavated 
- " inferred 
- " destroyed 

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The northern rampart is not so clearly visible, but its line was traced on the surface between two telephone-poles which have been planted in it, and by the hollows left by fallen trees which had taken root in the stonework. No ditch was found here, as the strong slope of the hill renders it unnecessary: but a retaining wall about 12 feet north of the rampart seems to have taken its place. The rampart on excavation proved to be less robbed than that on the east, and measured about 9 feet across.

The length of this northern wall is defined by its intersection with the east wall and by the north-west corner, which can be traced with ease. The limits of the eastern rampart, however, cannot be so defined, as no remains of the south rampart are visible. Accordingly we looked for a gate in it. This was located by a causeway standing well above the general level of the field and proving to be a road running north-easterly in the direction of Old Carlisle. It is probably the main road between that place and Papcastle, and can be traced across the next field, east of the modern road, though its traces farther on have been obliterated by the making of the road from Maryport to Cockermouth. Most of the kerbstones on its south-east side have been removed, and its north-west side has been disturbed by a drain: but the surface was found, consisting of two layers of tightly packed stones and clay bedded on a layer of large stones and containing a few fragments of Samian and charcoal.

The east gate was found at the intersection of this road with the rampart. It was a double gateway, of which the northern half had been closed by a wall subsequent to the main building. Both the north and south jambs were found: but the northern one has been much robbed of stone, and immediately beyond the southern the whole rampart has been quarried away, so that a deep

hollow now takes its place. If however the gate was in the middle of the wall, the south-east angle must have been at the corner of the modern road between the Pinfold and the entrance to the Mount garden, though probably at a higher level.

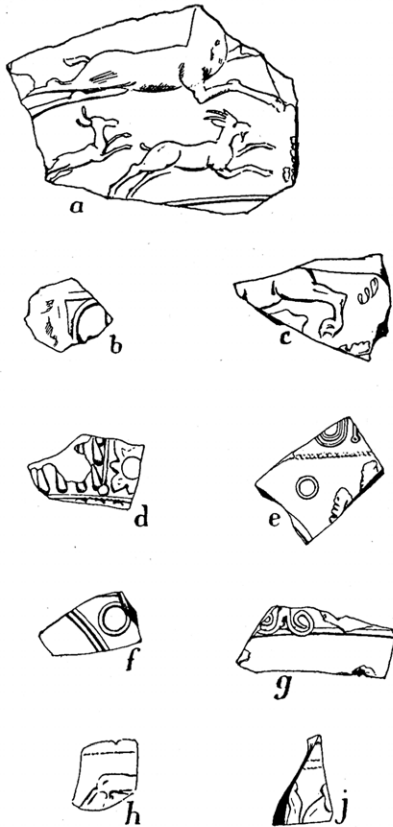


FIG. 1.—FIGURED SAMIAN WARE (½).

The gateway was paved with a concrete of lime and gravel, laid on larger stones. This form of paving we found all over the site; the gravel was brought from the river and contained many quartz and coloured

pebbles, which were laid on the surface no doubt for the sake of ornament. On the floor were many fragments of roofing slate, amphorae (including fig. 2) and Samian,



FIG. 2.—STAMP ON AMPHORA-HANDLE ($\frac{1}{2}$).

including a piece of shape 37 in the late Lezoux free style dating late in the second century (fig. 1a). Here also we found a clay pellet, spherical, and about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter, exactly like a modern marble and apparently too small for a sling-bullet.

The previous discovery of blackened grain in the road south-east of this gate suggested that a granary might have existed there. We dug accordingly close to the road, and found a building, outside the rampart, paved in the manner described above, but very much ruined. Of its west wall the clay foundation alone remained. One course of its north wall was found. The east wall has been cut away in making the road, and the south wall has also disappeared, except for three large blocks of rough stone which may possibly have formed a very rude pillar-base. A good deal of Samian in small fragments and coarse ware chiefly buff, was

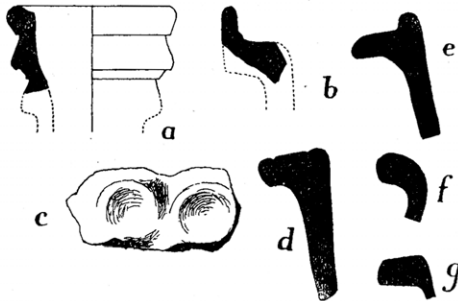


FIG. 3.—MISCELLANEOUS COARSE WARE ($\frac{1}{2}$).

found ; one Samian dish, shape 31, was recognisable. The north-east portion of this building has been used as a rubbish heap, and Roman pottery was found indiscriminately mixed with modern wares of many different periods from mediæval green glaze onward. There was, however, no sign of a granary : and the fact that this building, which lies on undisturbed soil, is higher in level than the spot where the grain is still to be seen suggests that, if there was a granary, it has been quite destroyed. Some portions of it might perhaps be found in the field across the road, where there are indications of a building.

Here, and elsewhere in the site, small pieces of red fired clay were found, together with very friable bricks of the same clay. These seemed to indicate local brickworks ; and from Mr. T. M. Harris and Mr. John Gorley, one of our diggers, I learnt that bricks had been made near Cockermouth till within living memory. Mr. Harris identified one of these local bricks, known as Mackereth bricks, in a wall near by, and the clay seems to me to be the same, though the modern brick is much better fired than the ancient. Mr. Gorley added that another brickfield, called the Bolton brickworks (from their owner), was working 47 years ago on the Brigham road out of Cockermouth. Another feature of the site was the large number of early tobacco pipes found. Some of these were the common early Broseley clays, others of the same pattern but made of local clay. These are found freely scattered near Papcastle, and are ascribed by local tradition to the " Picts " (*i.e.*, fairies?).

At the north side of this building, on the paving but outside the wall, we found two skeletons which Mr. E. S. Goodrich, F.R.S., kindly examined and found to be bones of very young calves. The northern edge of this paving is destroyed.

We also explored the north-east corner of the camp. The corner-tower was located, and coarse pottery and

sheep-bones found on the paving. In clearing this floor we came across a wall-footing of ashlar well laid with lime mortar. This wall ran north and south, parallel with the east rampart; at this point its eastern face seems to have formed a threshold for the corner-tower. We followed it, after finding its western face, in a southerly direction. Here it gradually came nearer to the surface, and about 20 yards from the corner-tower it disappeared. In the other direction it went deeper under the ground, going under the north rampart at about 3 feet 6 inches from the surface and afterwards beginning to curve in a westerly direction. With it were associated fragments of Samian of an earlier type than those previously found, including part of a vase of shape 30. These fragments are dated by Mr. J. P. Bushe-Fox, who kindly examined them, in the Antonine period (middle second century), whereas the others are all late second century and later. Here, then, it appears that we have the wall of an earlier fort, lying near but not on the lines of the later building. The systematic stone-robbing which has removed all the later facings did not penetrate to the earlier wall, which lies for the most part below the later pavements. We only located this small piece of it.

We also trenched the inside of the camp in various places. The north rampart runs almost along the crest of the hill, so that the whole camp slopes strongly to the south; and we found that parts of it at least had been terraced with retaining walls. Near the top of the hill the soil is only about 6 inches deep and there are no coherent remains. Lower down the depth of soil increases considerably; but our trial trenches showed nothing but the retaining walls till we got into the southern part of the camp, where a building was discovered containing large quantities of pottery, though all very fragmentary, nails, bones and one coin, a denarius of Galba. But

here again the Roman remains were much disturbed by draining, and green glaze and "Picts' pipes" were found, together with Castor and mortaria. A quantity of cancell was found here as in other parts.

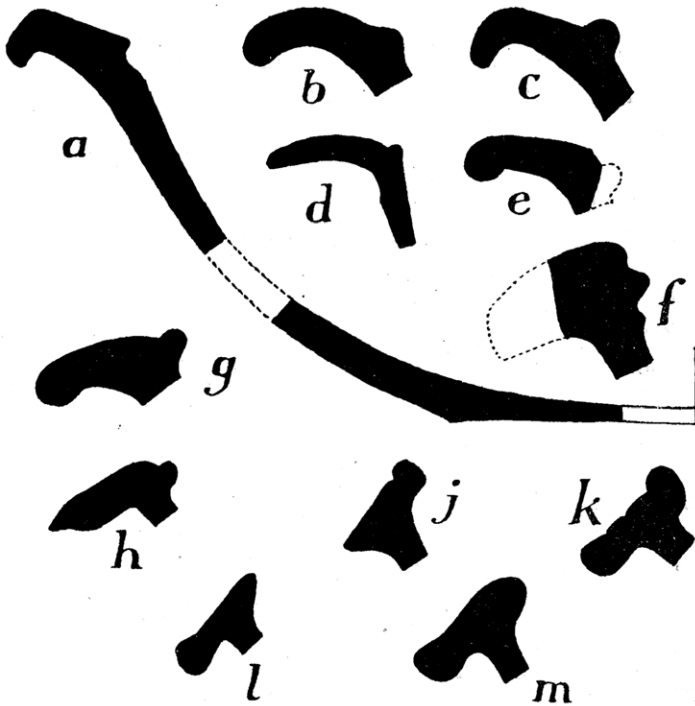


FIG. 4.—MORTARIA (1).

Our operations did not extend west of the hedge which roughly bisects the camp. Close to this hedge we drove a trench for the principia, but found nothing on the clay subsoil. Farther north we found the remains of a paving, close to the surface; the stones of which it had been made came out in large quantities. These were mostly red stone and broken roughly into cubes like those of a tessellated pavement. But there

was no foundation, and it looked as if these stones had been deposited there from a destroyed pavement rather than laid into one on the spot.

So brief an exploration was not intended to be exhaustive, and its results are not final. The whole site has been so thoroughly disturbed in the search for building stone that a complete excavation would perhaps be of little service. Our positive conclusions may be briefly put. There were two Roman forts at Papcastle: the earlier, of which we have only the north-east corner, built in good ashlar and lime masonry, and the later, less well built but probably larger, constructed late in the second century A.D. There does not seem to be any interval of time between the two occupations; but we may perhaps connect the second with the general re-organisation of the frontier district associated with the name of Severus. Of this we have the north and east walls, the former complete and the length of the latter suggested by the position of the gate from which the Old Carlisle road started. It appears to have been a roughly rectangular fort, measuring perhaps 620 by 540 feet. But the comparative poverty of its internal remains might lead us to suppose that it was not an important military station.

Other problems remain, and new ones have arisen. If excavation should ever be renewed, it might determine the size of the earlier fort by following its north wall, and reveal some of its interior buildings. The principia of the later camp are still to seek, and the whole of its western area is untouched.

