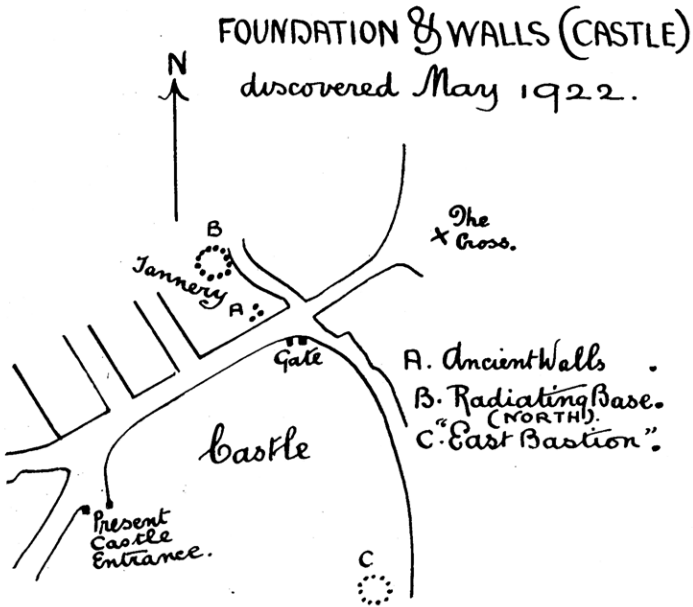


ART. XVII.—*Antiquities at Egremont.* By the late REV.
CÆSAR CAINE.

Read at Penrith, June 29th, 1922.

I.—THE TOWN GATE OF THE CASTLE.

THIS ancient township was all eager and astir, during the last few days of May, 1922, because of the discovery of ancient stonework on two distinct sites. The first find occurred in course of the demolition of the old tannery,



near Bookwell, where Mr. J. W. Parrish, manager for Messrs. John Laing & Son, was clearing the ground for the erection of a new cinema. The workmen, under Mr. Parrish, came upon an old and massive wall, which had

been utilised in the tannery buildings; and Mr. H. Oldfield, the architect, and Sergt. Stephenson were among the first to see these wall fragments.

The old containing-wall of the Castle formerly enclosed a much larger area than at present. To-day the enclosing wall is pierced by a small postern, which, were it in regular use, would be the direct way to the town. The whole situation and the character of the building suggests that the walls, now discovered, formed part of the original Town Gate of the Castle.

Of these newly found remains, the main wall was, by my measurements, about twenty feet long, and from eleven to fourteen feet high. The "return" wall (the fragment being shaped as a letter L reversed), was over eleven feet long. But later, a foundation was traced making this arm to approximate in length to the other side—about twenty feet. The walls varied in thickness from four to two feet, but the thinner wall had apparently been scaled and re-faced and the measurement was taken when the re-facing had been removed. The face of the main wall, inside the angle, bore traces of barrel roofing, and a number of flags which were found had been used, apparently, in the vaulting.

A few days subsequent to this discovery, other stones equally interesting were brought to light. I have stated that the main wall of the Castle ruins, discovered on the tannery site, extended twenty feet. Further evidences clearly indicate that at this point the wall has extended some twenty-five yards, and that there had been also a small round tower or bastion on the line of the wall. At the extremity of the wall, furthest from the angle described as a reversed L, a number of radiating stones "in situ" were unearthed. These stones slightly varied in size, running about two feet six inches long, and about a foot wide. They measured, on the upper side or face, about seven inches toward the centre, and about a foot on

the outside of the circle. Some were slightly thinner and measured about five and nine inches at their respective ends.

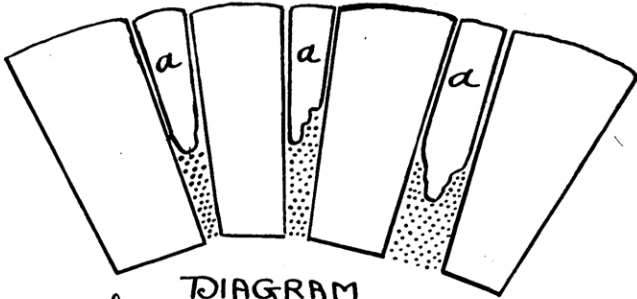


DIAGRAM
of RADIATING STONES forming
Tower-base. Outer radius about 9ft.
"a" Rougher stones. Dots = Rubble.

A tower or bastion is exactly what one would look for at this point. Skirting Beck runs round the north of the Castle area, and along the east side. On the east, overlooking the beck, there is a small mound, accepted as the base of the tower. The site now discovered occupies a corresponding position overlooking the beck to the north. It is regrettable that the work of demolition and rebuilding proceeded so rapidly that a photograph of the entire base of radiating stones was not possible. Indeed, several stones had been removed by the workmen before their special character had been recognised.

II.—THE CROSS.

The second discovery was occasioned by the demolition of the Town Cross. It is well known that the structure is modern, but the site is very ancient.* After the workmen had removed the outer structure, the work was delayed, so

* The market charter was granted in 1266-7. The cross may date from that period.

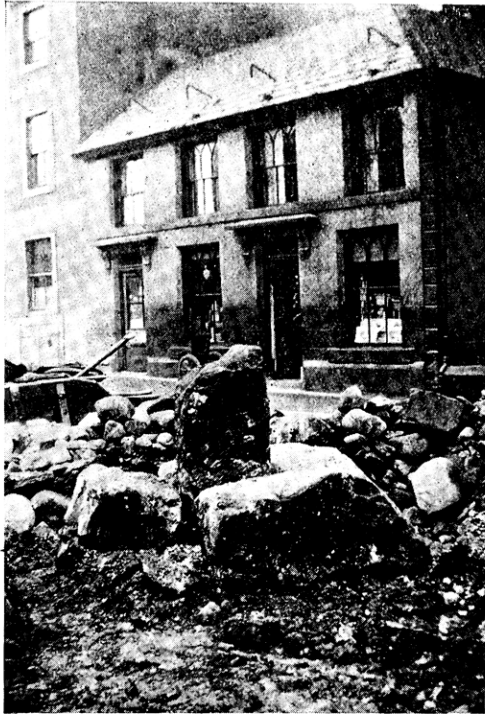
that I could visit the site, and watch the final stage of the work. The core of the structure, as I first saw it, was certainly modern, which was apparent even by an examination of the mortar. When a number of flags, which had once been used as steps, but had been turned over so that the worn face formed their base, had been removed, we came upon something really old, held together by a cement-like mixture, and which had been poured in, not plastered.

The base of the ancient cross was here revealed. The socket of the cross was peculiar. A huge boulder had been cut open on one side forming three sides of the socket. Another boulder had been jammed against it, on the open side, so forming a four-sided socket. These boulders were waterworn, and apparently had not been taken from the solid deposit of a quarry. Further examination showed the presence of small barnacle-shells, indicating that the stones had been brought from the sea shore.

The remnant of the cross-shaft in the socket, at the point where it was first displayed, measured twenty inches by fourteen, but became narrower below.

When quite cleared of rubble and cement it stood about twenty-one inches above the boulder which held it. The shaft had been forced into a true perpendicular position by pine wedges driven into the socket. After a little exposure to the air these stakes were reduced to almost the consistence of pulp. The three stones forming the socket, and bottom part of the standard of the cross, should be carefully preserved. Further, though the cross, as it recently existed, possessed no merits, but rather the reverse, yet it marked a very ancient site. This site should not be forgotten. Might it not be well to place a lettered slab, in the pavement, indicating what once stood there?

It should be mentioned that Mr. Jas. Cowan, the surveyor to the Urban Council, has been most assiduous in



BASE OF THE ANCIENT MARKET CROSS,
EGREMONT.

TO FACE PAGE 136

watching that no stone should be removed until it was carefully examined.

A series of photographs were secured of both the wall and the cross, by Sgt. Stephenson and Mr. Parrish, jun., from which one of the cross is here reproduced; others are deposited in the Society's cabinet at Tullie House, Carlisle.

In connection with these facts it should be named that about sixty years ago, the upper part of the cross-shaft was taken to Marlborough Hall Farm, St. Bees, and placed in a field as a rubbing stone for cattle. Cannot this be recovered and preserved with the other relics named?
