

ART. XII.—*A British Rath near Kirkby Lonsdale.* By
the REV. CANON WARE, M.A.

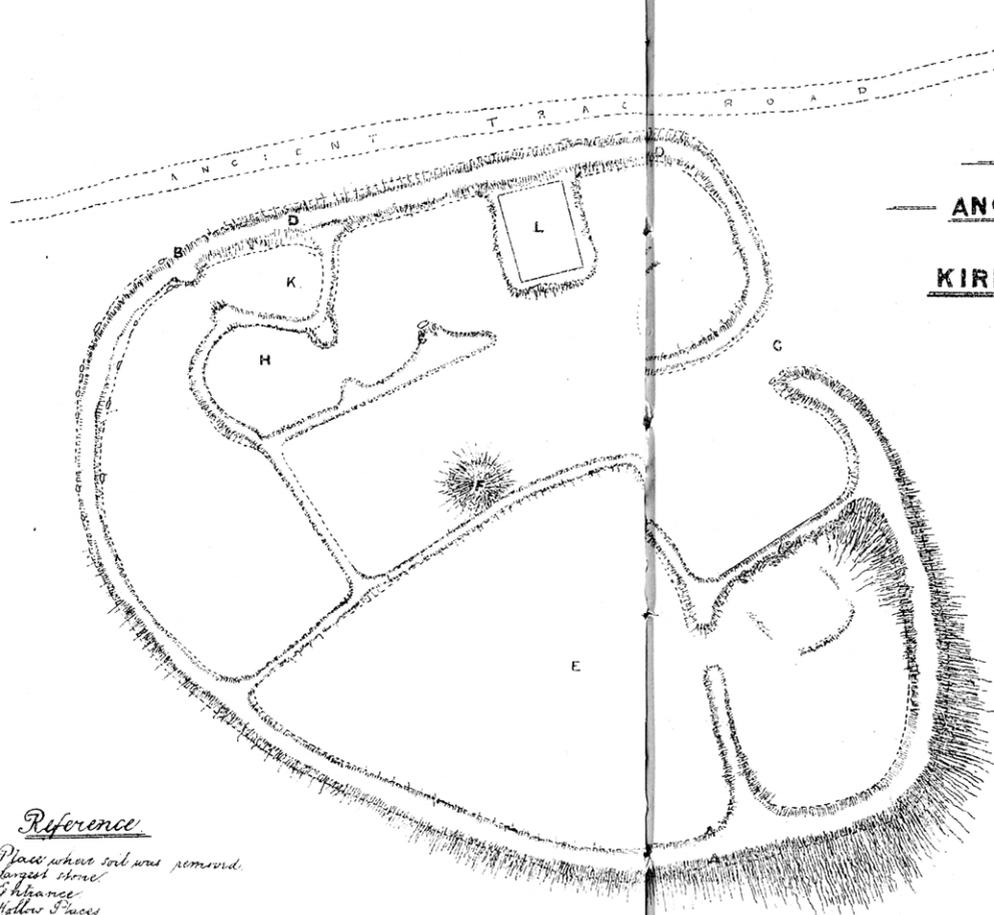
Read at Caldbeck, August 22nd, 1883.

IN the map of Roman roads prefixed to Mr. W. T. Watkin's Roman Lancashire, there is marked a supposed road from Overborough to Natland; and at page eighty-four of that work it is stated that there are traces of a causeway crossing the river Lune by a bridge and pointing towards Natland, but that it is lost on the western side of the river. Mr. W. R. Gregg of Kirkby Lonsdale, informs me that he was a boy at the Kirkby Lonsdale Grammar School when Mr. Just was usher there, in the early part of this century, and that he himself accompanied Mr. Just when he traced out the ancient trackway or Roman road for some distance past Sellet Mill, behind Biggins, and across Lupton Fell. Since the enclosure of the commons and various other changes in the land, the traces of this road are less visible than they must have been formerly, but it followed the line of a footpath from Biggins to "Gallowber Lane" (the road leading from Kirkby Lonsdale to Hutton Roof); and thence it remains to Sealford as a cart road. Close to the point where it crossed Gallowber, about two miles from Kirkby Lonsdale, in a field called "Grass Slacks" belonging to the Earl of Bective, are what appear to be the remains of a Celtic fortified village, which I pointed out to Mr. R. S. Ferguson when this Society visited Kirkby Lonsdale in June, and at his suggestion a plan has been made by Mr. J. S. Roper, with whom I have carefully examined the spot. There is a remarkable resemblance between it and the Rath or Cashels, described in Dr. Anderson's "Scotland in early Christian Times" (see especially the plan of the Cashel
at

at Innismurry on page 87). The existing remains cover about two-thirds of an acre, and consists of mounds of stones and earth rising from one to three feet above the surface of the ground. With the help of a labourer we removed some turf and soil from the south-west corner of the outer fence, to see whether any courses of the walling remained. We found some stones apparently forming the inner face of the wall, but it must have been of the roughest possible character, banking rather than walling, and about five feet thick. Along the northern side of the enclosure there are many large stones set on end and projecting from the ground, marking the original width of the wall, which in that part has been six or seven feet thick. The largest of these stones is about five feet long, and stands three feet six inches out of the ground. The entrance was from the east and appears to have had a flanking wall on its north side. There are some hollow spaces in the north part of the wall, which possibly have been small chambers in the wall (see Anderson's Book, pages 78 and 87), or the stones from that part of the fence may have been removed. I can trace no remains of buildings in the large triangular space on the south-west of the enclosure. It may have been a kraal for cattle. Adjoining this, near the centre of the Rath, is a large mound, which might be a beehive hut fallen in. And to the north is rough ground with many stones, especially three large stones standing together, of which the central one stands two feet six inches out of the ground, and is pierced with holes, which I think are natural. Near this again are what may be the foundations of two circular huts. Measuring from the centre of the wall, one would be about twenty-seven feet in diameter, the other about fifteen feet. I can find the remains of only one rectangular building, the inside measure of which would be about twenty-one feet by fifteen feet four inches. If the enclosure is a "Rath" of early Christian times, similar to those described in Dr.

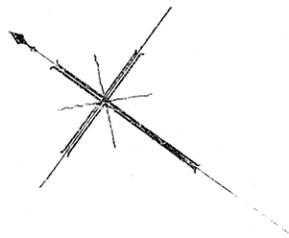
Anderson's

PLAN OF
ANCIENT REMAINS
 NEAR
KIRKBY LONSDALE



Reference

- A Place where soil was removed.
- B Lowest stone
- C Entrance
- D Yellow Pines
- E Large Open space, supposed to be a road.
- F Largest Mound.
- G Other large stones
- H Large circular pit
- K Smaller circular pit
- L Supposed to be a pit with paved masonry inside.



Anderson's Book, this must have been the chapel, but it is not orientated, the axis running north-east by south-west, or even a point more to the north and south. We moved a little of the turf and soil from its south-east side, and found the interior wall of the building, which seemed rather more carefully built than we had found the outer fence to be. The doorway seems to have been at the south-west end, and we dug a little at the west angle, but the walling there was not so well preserved as on the south-east side of the building. The large blocks of stone are limestone; the walling chiefly limestone and "blue stones" such as might be picked off the ground, and there are some small pieces of freestone, such as may be found in the upper beds of the neighbouring quarries at Hutton Roof. I looked for cup markings on the larger stones, but discovered none. We thought it better not to excavate further, believing that this rectangular building (and indeed some other parts of the enclosure), might repay more careful and thorough investigations than we could then make.

The Rath stands on high ground, sloping towards the north-west, and with an extensive view towards the Lake Hills. About eighty yards to the north is some flat ground which looks as if, before the land was drained or cultivated, it might have been a small tarn or mere, and at a distance of about 200 yards to the west there is a spring of water.

In an adjoining field, still called "Coffin Croft," some stone coffins are said to have been found many years ago.