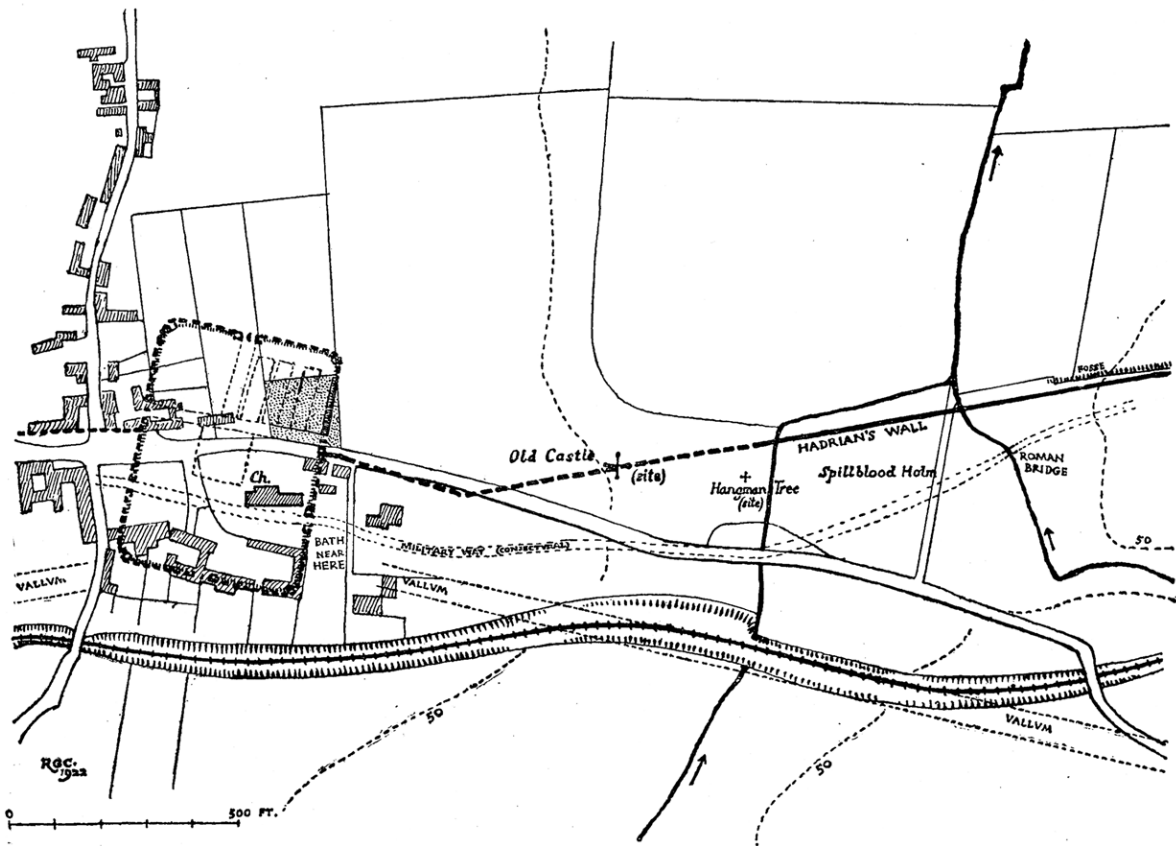


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BURGH-BY-SANDS (BROKEN LINES CONJECTURAL).

ART. I.—*Explorations at the Roman fort of Burgh-by-Sands.* By R. G. COLLINGWOOD, M.A., F.S.A.

*Communicated at Carlisle, April 6th, 1922.*

OF the seventeen stations belonging to Hadrian's Wall, that at Burgh-by-Sands\* has for many years been the least well known; in fact the present writer, when undertaking the preparation of an atlas of Roman forts under Professor Haverfield's direction ten years ago, was instructed to omit Burgh on the ground that its site and indeed its very existence were uncertain.

Horsley, writing early in the eighteenth century (*Britannia Romana*, p. 156) placed the fort "a little to the east of the church, near what they call the *Old Castle*, where there are the manifest remains of its ramparts. On the west these remains are most distinct, being about six chains in length. And *Severus's* wall seems to have formed the north rampart of the station." But Horsley is here describing the castle of Sir Hugh de Morville, which stood on the slope of the hill about 300 yards east of the church, and of which some remains were visible in his day. The castle was very likely built of Roman stones: but there is no evidence in support of Horsley's view that the Roman station was on its site.

Hodgson (*History of Northumberland*, part ii, vol. iii, p. 223; 1840) comes nearer the mark. "Great quanti-

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\* The forms Burgh-by-Sands and Burgh-upon-(on-)Sands are both found from an early date, and are indifferently used in the earliest documents. The fact that Camden elected to adopt the form Burgh-upon-Sands has naturally led to the general use of that form by antiquaries, at least by those without special local knowledge; for in modern times that form has passed out of local use and the form adopted in the text is the only one nowadays warranted by local and official usage.

ties of hewn stone," he says, "are found in the field just north of the church and the highway called the Monk Croft, and in that immediately east of it called the Broad Field." In 1821, he continues, when the canal was made—the track of the present railway—Samian ware, coins and an altar were found in it, and foundations of houses, a flue full of soot, and Roman pottery on the flat ground near the vicarage barn. But he does not commit himself to a view as to where exactly the Roman fort was situated.

Bruce is even less definite. "Little meets the eye of the inquirer," he says (*Roman Wall*, ed. 1, 1851, p. 305), "to inform him of the spot where the station stood;" but, he observes, cut stones and foundations are found in the churchyard. In his third edition he merely adopts the view, published by then, of Maclauchlan, who alone attempts a definite identification of the site. In his great atlas of the Wall and accompanying *Memoir* (1858) Maclauchlan places the fort round the church, the churchyard occupying its south-east angle and the high road passing through its *praetentura* not far within the north rampart. As usual, Maclauchlan sifted the evidence carefully, and his justification of his view (*Memoir*, p. 81) is closely-reasoned and inspires confidence.

It was the more disconcerting when, in 1903, a sewer was laid along this very high road, crossing both east and west walls of the fort as Maclauchlan plotted it, without the discovery of a single floor-level or scrap of walling, worked stone, or pottery. The trench was dug through absolutely untouched natural ground. The fact, however surprising, was past dispute, being determined by the careful personal inspection of our former President, Mr. T. H. Hodgson (these *Trans.* N.S. iv, pp. 247-249), and the inference seemed inevitable that Maclauchlan was wholly mistaken and that, if there was a Roman fort at Burgh, it lay to the east where Horsley claimed to have seen it.

In this state of uncertainty matters remained till 1921, when it was decided to enlarge the churchyard by enclosing half an acre of land\* north of the road, in the field called by Hodgson the Monk Croft. While the enclosing wall was being put up, remains of ancient walls were discovered in the foundation-trench. News of the discovery having been communicated to this society, Mr. F. G. Simpson, Dr. R. C. Shaw, the President and the present writer met on the field before the autumn meeting and with the assistance of Mr. Bertram Carr and Mr. Brown, the churchwardens, examined the ancient walling. This proved to be a couple of parallel two-foot walls separated by a two-foot interval, and built of squared freestone in a style quite obviously Roman. No Roman relics were forthcoming to confirm the inference suggested by the character of the masonry, but the latter by itself was clearly enough marked to make the inference inevitable. The discovery was reported at the autumn meeting, and it was decided to carry out a short exploration in the following spring, before the ground should have been consecrated. A thorough opening-up of the site was out of the question, partly because at such short notice time and funds were lacking, partly because an extensive disturbance of the ground would have made the digging of graves in it impossible. All that was required was definite proof of the Roman or other character of the work discovered, and if possible the location of the Roman fort. It was decided to dig for three days at the beginning of April, with two men. Mr. Carr and Mr. Brown again helped in every possible way, finding two excellent workmen and lodgings for the directing party, which consisted of the President, Mrs. R. G. Collingwood, and the present writer.

It was evident from the start that we were digging in the *praetentura* of the fort. The old churchyard

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\* The stippled area on the annexed plan.

occupies part at least of the *retentura*, and the site is cut in two by the high road. But it was soon clear why no relics were found in 1903. The site is on a hill; the road, for ease of gradients, runs in a slight cutting; and in making this cutting the Roman levels have been stripped off and the bottoming of the road laid on virgin soil. The fort is where Maclauchlan placed it, but much larger than he supposed it to be, and extends north of Hadrian's Wall, which is further south than he placed it. Horsley's site is definitely ruled out as medieval, and on Hodgson's evidence we may place the bath-house outside the fort on the south-east. After proving that we had really found the fort we felt justified in engaging some additional hands, and for the last day we had four extra men sent out from Carlisle, whose presence enabled us to make our most important discovery, namely that of the main east gateway (*porta principalis dexterior*).

The area explored is a square of 150-160 feet each way, lying north of the main road and opposite the church. It is enclosed on the east by a hedge, on the other sides by a stone wall; and is entered by a gate and gravelled ramp from the road, facing which, and fifty feet from the gate, stands the war memorial. It was at about the centre of the northern wall that the ancient walls had been found in 1921.

We began by reopening the same place and identifying one of the ancient walls. It was 25 inches thick, and stood three courses high (18 inches) in cut freestone. West of it was a clay floor with Roman pottery, 2 feet to 2 feet 3 inches below the surface; east of it were three to four feet of gravel at the same depth, indicating a road, and then the stones of a ruined wall. This confirmed the impression formed in 1921 that we were in the alley-way between the backs of two barrack-blocks running north and south: a theory which we

tested by trying to follow the walls already laid bare and to find the corresponding walls on the other sides of the buildings concerned. We soon found that the wall which had first been discovered was quite exceptional in its preservation. For the most part we saw no cut stone at all, every fragment having been removed, with very great disturbance of floor-levels, for use in the medieval and later buildings adjoining the site. It seems to be a mere chance that has preserved one short length of walling on the line where the foundation-trench of the new boundary-wall laid it bare. We therefore saw nothing else resembling a wall, but the alternation of clayey with gravelly ground and their frequent separation by belts of loose cobbles gave us some indication of the sites of buildings and streets. The time and means at our disposal made it impossible to follow these out in detail; our business was to establish the existence of the fort, not to plan its internal buildings. We did, however, lay down in a number of long trenches the character of the ground met with, which enabled us to say that we were working among stone barrack-buildings running north and south—parallel to the axis of the fort as at Housesteads, not at right angles to it as at Chesters—and gave us data which, if at any future time further digging is done, will help to construct a general plan.

Our chief efforts were concentrated on the east rampart of the fort. The hedge bounding the area to eastward banks up the ground some four feet, and this led us to suppose that the rampart might lie west of this hedge and the ditch to eastward. We therefore drove trenches up against the hedge, crossing a slight bank which could be detected inside and parallel to it. Here we found the rampart, a stone wall between 6 and 7 feet thick. Its core was of rubble and mortar; the outer face was gone; the inner face remained three courses high, the

stones having so completely rotted that the spade cut them without resistance. Their preservation was no doubt due to this fact. West of this wall there was some evidence of the usual earth bank, which seems to have been terminated to westward by a freestone wall 2 feet 6 inches thick, now visible as a mass of yellow sand with a sharply rectangular section, the stones here also having rotted. Whether this inner wall was really a retaining-wall for the inner face of the bank, as at Gellygaer, or part of a late building abutting against the rampart after the partial removal of the bank, as at Housesteads and Great Chesters, cannot be said. West of this wall again our trenches met the cobbles of a road, the normal *via sagularis*.

Having established the line of the rampart by taking three such sections across it and cutting a deep trench east of it in order to make sure, by the absence of floors and other remains, that our supposed rampart was not some internal structure, we determined to look for a gateway in the south-east corner of our area. This decision was based on information received from Mr. F. G. Simpson, who told the writer that he had seen a sketch of what appeared to be a portion of the north face of Hadrian's Wall as discovered by drainage operations in 1877 under the main road, a few feet in advance of the cottages on its south side immediately east of the churchyard. If this information were correct, it would enable us to locate the junction of the fort rampart with Hadrian's Wall, and would prove that the fort lay astride the Wall like Chesters. Now at Chesters the main gateways of the fort are north of the Wall, and the main east gate at Burgh, if planned in the same way, would be partly destroyed by the modern road and partly traceable to the north of it.

We considered that the gate, if found, would tell us more about the general plan and character of the fort



than any other feature, and determined to devote all our remaining time to the search for it. Here again every facing-stone and much even of the rubble cores had been removed, but what remained was sufficient. Where in other trenches we had found the earth rampart-bank, we here found an unmistakable roadway of very hard rammed gravel interrupting the line of the rampart. We traced this road some feet outside the rampart, running across the berm which elsewhere had been found to consist of undisturbed natural ground. Where the road came into line with the face of the rampart it was suddenly interrupted by a trench right across its width: this obviously represented the place from which the stone sills or thresholds had been robbed. West of this the road-metal began again. Doing what we could to determine the features of the gate, we traced the road-metal northwards till it gave out along a line where the facing-stones of the gateway had been extracted. The core of the wall separating gateway from guard-chamber was visible, and north of this we found the guard-chamber, whose clay floor, three feet below the modern surface, was marked by pottery and bones. Its west wall completely eluded us, but 12 feet from the south wall we found what may have been tumbled relics of the north wall. Here we also found a voussoir measuring 5 by 6 by 8 inches.

It was clear throughout our work that the site was one of long occupation, and here and there signs of stratification occurred. In the northern part of the guard-chamber, for instance, a late floor 2 feet down was clearly visible. But wherever we dug the stratification was much disturbed by stone-robbing, and to decipher it would require a longer and more systematic examination than that here reported.

In the gateway itself the road-metal revealed the former existence of a recess eight inches deep, into which

the gates fitted when open, and a mass of clay and cobbles was found which may have been the foundations of a *spina*. The road showed signs of stratification, but all disturbed. It is worth mentioning, however, that in the gateway itself we found some fragments of oak timber and two scraps of medieval pottery a foot below the surface. It would be rash to argue from these that the Roman ruins were used as some kind of temporary habitation during the middle ages: the pottery may have been dropped by any of the stone-robbers who certainly quarried the ruins for centuries.

The objects found were not important. A bronze minim of the ordinary fourth-century type was the only coin; it was completely corroded into powder and not decipherable. The pottery included a fair quantity of Samian of ordinary types, Lezoux decorated (37) bowls, one with the stamp . . . . NI (? PATERNI) retrograde in the decoration, and plain shapes including a 31 platter stamped SATVRNINI.OF and a 33 cup, stamped MAX . . . , in hard gritty ware. The coarse pottery found was all of familiar types dating from the second to the fourth century. Nothing was found which required a date before the middle of the second century, and the amount of pottery seeming to require a date at all late in the fourth century was not large. In short, the range of dates attributable to the finds was exactly what would be expected on a Wall site, but the finds were, naturally, too small in bulk to add anything to what might safely have been conjectured without them as to the dating of the site.

We took the opportunity of exploring the course of the Wall in the neighbourhood of the fort. East of Burgh its course has been correctly laid down by Mac-lauchlan from Beaumont to the point where it crosses the stream before climbing the hill on which Burgh stands. It is especially visible descending towards this

stream and crossing the flat ground at the bottom of the slope, where the western branch of the stream runs for some distance in its fosse. Sixty-five yards up the eastern branch, measured from the point at which the Wall hits the stream, is a culvert or small bridge, not previously described, carrying the Military Way over the watercourse. The eastern side of the culvert is visible *in situ* to the extent of four courses of large stones in the right bank of the beck; other squared and tooled stones are lying in the bed of the beck itself. The stones run about 2 ft. 6 in. to 3 ft. 3 in. long, and 5 in. thick. The beck here is eroding its right bank, which accounts for the exposure of the stones *in situ*: the other side of the culvert is doubtless buried in the left bank. This is the only point at which we have certain evidence of the position of the Military Way. The Wall, from the point where it leaves the stream, must aim towards the church or an even more southerly point, since the information supplied by Mr. Simpson and confirmed by our own work shows that it did not, as Maclauchlan thought, run north of the main road but actually travelled along it in front of the Vicarage, the modern road being laid partly on the Wall and partly on its berm. At some point east of the Vicarage therefore the Wall comes into the road from the field north of it and so follows the road till it reaches the fort.

West of the fort the Wall is not at first traceable, but towards the western end of the village there are plain indications of it, notably visible facing-stones in a lane running north from the main road near the railway station. These permit of a fairly accurate inference as to the course of the Wall on leaving the fort and travelling through the heart of the village towards Dykesfield. We are not able to throw any fresh light on the course of the Vallum; but if Maclauchlan's line is tolerably correct, the earthwork must have turned to avoid the

fort on coming close up to its walls. The number of forts at which this is now known to have happened is so large that the addition of Burgh would be only natural.

The upshot of our three days' work is that the fort at Burgh is not only proved to exist, but located with some accuracy and identified as belonging to the Chesters type: that is to say the type of enlarged fort lying astride the Wall, having therefore in all probability an area of over four acres and capable of accommodating a milliary cohort, unless indeed the garrison were cavalry. As to the identity of the garrison we have no clue, and we remain in the same complete ignorance as before of the fort's Romano-British name. Plotting the fort upon the map as well as our data permit, we see that the church occupies the probable site of one of the central buildings, perhaps the granary—the site being doubtless recommended by the special profusion of stone lying there—that the modern high road roughly represents the *via principalis*, and that a quite respectable part of the *praetentura* falls in unencumbered ground where further digging could easily be done. It is impossible to close without expressing the hope that this area may be, at some not long distant date, explored with a proper expenditure of labour and time; a hundred pounds would go far towards the work, and the kind and sympathetic reception given to us in 1922 encourages us to hope that a further visit might prove not unwelcome.

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