

ART. X.—*Roman and Briton. A Theory for future establishment of facts.* By MARY C. FAIR.

DURING the past ten years so many of the previous theories of historians and archaeologists have had to be re-orientated owing to the brilliant work of research workers and scientific excavators that in view of the different complexion put upon the relations of the Roman authorities in occupation of our North-Western area of Britain, I venture to put forward a tentative suggestion for criticism as to the purpose of a small and little-known group of remains scattered over a part of our district. For it is obvious that Roman garrisons and British natives lived side by side on terms of amicable relationship; outside the forts we now know little townships grew up which enjoyed the privilege of self government; at Old Carlisle the Parish Council of the Vicani subscribed for a handsome altar, and there is the same story clearly to be read in the excavation report of the exploration of the vicus of Housesteads. At Papcastle, Ravenglass, Moresby, Maryport, Stanwix, we know there were these Vici, approved centres of native activity and trade, eloquent of the friendly relations between military garrisons and native neighbours. Moreover Mr. Birley has suggested that at Brougham not only did the Vicus grow up with the planting of the cohort fort to guard the river crossing, but there may also well have been a British centre there before the coming of the Romans and a native occupation lingering on after the Romans left Britain to her fate (these *Trans.* N.S. xxxii, 137). And Professor R. G. Collingwood has intriguingly suggested

that the British chief whose establishment at Ewe Close was excavated by our Society was established there before the Roman military engineers laid out their great trunk road from Lancaster to Carlisle, and was permitted to remain in statu quo after that official highway was constructed (*ibid.* n.s. xxxiii, 204-5). All this negatives the early dictum in the histories of our youthful days of a harsh military occupation holding down a resentful and hostile native population, and it is with this alteration of the character of the relation of Roman to Briton that I venture to put forward my theory for the purpose and character of the little group of remains for consideration and the plea that when research with the spade is once more possible excavation of one or more of these most interesting sites be undertaken.

The sites of which so little has been recorded and which have received all too little attention, are a group of posts, their true character only to be ascertained by careful and scientific excavation. They are Castle Crag in Borrowdale, Peel Wyke at the foot of Borrowdale, Ree Castle above Lodore, Shoulthwaite, and The Helme near Kendal. To these may perhaps be added a few minor posts, and possibly High Haume north of Barrow and Castle Head near Grange. These posts all overlook ancient trackways, routes which would be in use by British traders and inter-settlement travellers, and it appears to me, after much consideration, that the Roman administrative authorities may well have had a hand in establishing them as look-out and signal stations along these byeways, putting them in charge of native Home Guard units whose duty would be to keep an eye on what passed along these routes.

These posts have a system of ditches; ditches cut in living rock need skilled cutting with good tools, and though they are clearly native eyries there is a whisper of Roman inspiration behind their execution and placing at strategic points on the lines of communication. It may be worth while to consider them in brief detail.

*Castle Crag in Borrowdale* overlooks the trackway from Hardknot over Esk Hause and Stake Pass to Caermot, Old Carlisle and Papcastle. It is visible from Sca Fell and signals from this mountain (within easy reach of Hardknott), and Caermot could be easily picked up. What little is known about it is set forth by Professor R. G. Collingwood in *ibid.* n.s. xxiv, 83. It is possible that Castle Crag in Mardale may be added to the series, for it too overlooks a route from the Roman fort at Kendal over Nan Bield to Brougham and Carlisle, though when it was excavated no Roman remains were found as they were at Castle Crag in Borrowdale (*ibid.* n.s. xxiii, 285-6).

Castle How, Peel Wyke, at the foot of Bassenthwaite, overlooks the junction of two important roads, leading from Papcastle to Caermot and Old Carlisle, and along the lake to Voreda and Brougham. Professor Collingwood examined the place and noted Roman stones, but it might repay excavation (*ibid.* n.s. xxiv, 78 *seq.*). Further along between Bassenthwaite and Keswick we have the suggestion of important Roman links of communication in the mention of a causeway across the marshes between Bassenthwaite and Derwentwater in the Fountains Abbey Chartulary (*a*) from Crosthwaite along the slopes of Skiddaw to the east of Bassenthwaite where it would join the road passing under Peel Wyke and turn north for Caermot and Old Carlisle, and (*b*) one along the foot of Derwentwater over a "pons petra" to the foot of Whinlatter Pass (*ibid.* n.s. xxi, 153). Is the reason why the Romans placed no fort at or near Keswick because of the marshy nature of the neighbourhood? St. Cuthbert's friend St. Herebert is said to have dwelled on an island in the marshes of Derwent.

Caermot, north of Bassenthwaite, on the way to Old Carlisle, is a puzzling place, purely Roman in construction and lay-out, but of indeterminate purpose. Was it just a wayside signal post, or perhaps connected

with local mining activities? It was explored by the late Professor Haverfield (*ibid.* n.s. iii, 331, *seq.*).

Ree Castle stands above the ancient trackway leading down into Borrowdale from Ambleside by Ashness and Lodore.

Shoulthwaite looks down upon an ancient track heading from Ambleside to Voreda and Brougham; Professor R. G. Collingwood notes that it has the typical crescentic ditches similar to Peel Wyke and he saw there a slab of red sandstone similar to those he noted at Peel Wyke (*ibid.* n.s. xxiv, 82).

Dunmallet at the end of Ullswater stands above the very ancient route over Kirkstone Pass from Ambleside to Brougham. Whether it falls into line with the other posts under consideration only excavation could decide. But that there was an important road over Kirkstone Pass is demonstrated by Mr. Hay (*ibid.* n.s. xxxvii, 53-4).

The Helme near Kendal stands upon a height while the Roman fort is on low-lying riverside ground. The Helme therefore forms a good point of vantage for lookout native watchmen and signallers. It is described in *ibid.* n.s. viii, 108-112.

I think it very possible that Castle Head near Grange may have belonged to this type of site, and possibly also High Haume north of Barrow; the latter would repay research as it may also be the site of a stone axe factory.

The site of Pendragon Castle may be on that of a wayside Roman post; a Roman coin was found there; here again excavation is needed.

And it appears to me that Castle How in the Duddon Valley may very well have been a native sentry's look-out post. There is another Castle How north of the Roman road overlooking Wrynose Pass, and on the summit of Harter Fell is a natural shelter in the living rock aided I think by human agency, a little rocky cell where one may

eat one's sandwiches in comfort with a bitter wind screaming overhead. On a plateau, a little shelf on the mountain flank, were noted remains of rude dwellings perhaps traces of native occupation. A team of workers could solve many problems of these up to the present, unplaced sites.

Addendum, April, 1943. I have just received information from a friend, a member of this Society, farming in the Duddon Valley, that there are remains of a British Settlement below Castle How, cairns and hut-circles of the same type as those at Barnscar west of Devoke Water.

M.C.F.