

ART. III.—*The Roman fort and settlement at Old Carlisle.*
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Partly read on the site, July 13th, 1948.

THE Roman fort at Old Carlisle has twice been the subject of studies communicated to this Society, by Haverfield in 1919¹ and by R. G. Collingwood in 1927,² and it might not seem necessary for me to do more than refer to their papers, in particular to Collingwood's, which sets forth in an appendix the texts of 29 inscriptions from Old Carlisle itself or from its immediate neighbourhood. But it happens that there are two main heads under which there is a good deal more to be said, namely the accounts by early writers (which will help us to understand how the site has come to assume its present appearance, and the extent to which it requires further investigation) and the significance of the site and its place in the framework of Roman military control of our district. The picture which Collingwood drew of the fort's history and that of its garrison has become something of a period piece, almost every detail of which must now be rejected as inaccurate; let it be remembered that the researches which have made possible the preparation of a more reliable picture were stimulated by Collingwood himself, and that he would have been the first to welcome a fresh assessment of the evidence.

§ 1. EARLY ACCOUNTS.

Canon James Wilson was the first to point out³ that there is a reference to Old Carlisle which goes back at

¹ CW2 xx 143-150.

² CW2 xxviii 103-119.

³ *The Antiquary* xli, 1905, 409f.

least to early medieval times. A gloss which occurs in some manuscripts of the Dark Age writer Nennius, referring to the castle of refuge which Vortigern built for himself, states that it was "at Guasmoric near Carlisle, a city which in English is called Palmcastre"⁴; now an inquest of 1305 includes Palmcastre among a group of enclosures in the King's forest, all the others being identifiable as places in the western part of the parish of Westward, and the general location is confirmed by a similar inquest of 1317, while a survey of the same area, dated 1578, mentions "Old Carliell at Palmcastle", and adds that John Pearson held "one tenement of Old Carliell with a barne and one close adjoining containing 1 acre and $\frac{1}{2}$ rood". Canon Wilson concluded that the enclosure contained at least 150 acres, including the site of the Roman fort; for our present purpose it is less important to consider whether there is any truth in the story about Vortigern,⁵ than to note that as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century the Roman site had been enclosed, and was already liable to be used as a quarry for the building of walls or houses.

It is usually assumed that Camden was the first visitor to describe the site, and both Haverfield and Collingwood credit him with visiting it "about 1580"; but it is clear that Camden was only there once, on his northern tour in 1599, and in the earlier editions of his *Britannia* he relied on information provided by friends or correspondents. One of them was the anonymous writer, to whose MS. notes I have had occasion to refer in my paper on Old Penrith⁶; he has this to say, as the gist of what he learnt from Edward Threlkeld on 2 September 1574:—

"At a place (called at this day) Old Caerlyle, xii mile from the now Caerlile right west frō the now Caerlyle, abowt 24 yeres past or then abowts, in the ruynes of an old walled town

⁴ Cf. now CW2 xlix 219-220, where the significance of the name *Guasmoric* is discussed by the Rev. A. W. Wade-Evans.

⁵ For a brief discussion of this question cf. Collingwood in CW2 xxviii 110f.

⁶ CW2 xlvii 166f.

was found a stone (as it wer the top of an arch) inscribed thus — I. O. M. || OB HONOREM . . . VXORIS = GORDIANI *etc.* || a long inscription which m^r Threlkell intendeth to get for me pfectely. And frō the same place was browght to a town thereby within 4 myle called Banton, a pece of one octogonall pyramy stone, having this inscription — OB HONOREM PHIL. IMP. NOBLISS^mi SEMPER AUG. ET PHILLIP. CAE. NOBLISS. This was sene abowt a^o. 1564 and is yet there”.⁷

The two inscriptions, of which these brief and inaccurate notes were made by our *Anonymus*, are without question Collingwood’s nos. 11 = C.344 and 28 = C.1178⁸; Camden used both readings in his earlier editions, only substituting fuller and more accurate versions in that of 1600,⁹ after he had had an opportunity of examining them himself during his northern tour in 1599. It will be noted that the Gordianic inscription was found *circa* 1550, when Threlkeld may well have seen it while home on vacation from Cambridge¹⁰; that of the two Philips was presumably a later discovery, though it was not necessarily found as late as 1564.

Camden’s other source of information was the Rev. Oswald Dykes, whom he describes as “eruditissimus vir Oswaldus Dikes divini verbi in hoc agro minister”—which should mean that Dykes was incumbent of Westward, though the county histories do not include his name among the records of that parish¹¹; he described the site to Camden as “the corpse of an ancient city”, reported two further inscriptions (Collingwood’s nos. 3 = C.337

⁷ M. A. Richardson, *Reprints of Rare Tracts &c.* . . , *Miscellaneous*, 1849, 7-8.

⁸ For Collingwood’s numbers and readings cf. CW2 xxviii 112f.; C. = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* vii.

⁹ P. 698.

¹⁰ Cf. CW2 xlvii 181.

¹¹ He became rector of Asby, Westmorland, in 1593 (N. & B. i 507); by January 1599 he was vicar of Wensley, Yorks, whence we find him writing to Camden’s friend Sir Robert Cotton (CW2 xiii 99f.), referring to a recent incident at Warwick Bridge. A detailed study of his life and connections is clearly long overdue; he was a member of the Dykes family of Warthole (cf. Whellan, *Cumberland*, 1860, 290).

and 5 = C.339), and added that the site constantly yielded innumerable little images, equestrian statues, eagles, lions and many more evidences of antiquity.¹² Camden's own contribution at this stage was confined to speculation as to the Roman name of the place, which he was inclined to equate with the *Voreda* of the Antonine Itinerary, whose name he fancied that he detected lurking in the modern name *Westward* (as he chose to spell it). But his own visit in 1599 suggested another identification; he noted that the site was ideally situated for viewing the whole surrounding district, and therefore concluded that it might well have been the *Castra exploratorum* of the same Itinerary.¹³ He saw and took copies of three fresh inscriptions, Collingwood's nos. 7 = C.340, 8 = C.341¹⁴ and 23 = C.353,¹⁵ secured better readings of the two which the *Anonymus* had noted, and obtained from Dykes revised readings of the two texts which the latter had previously reported to him. Altogether, then, Camden knew of seven inscriptions from Old Carlisle, and noted (unusually for him) the excellent all-round view to be obtained there, but he had nothing to say about the Roman site itself. The deficiency was more than made good by our next visitor, William Stukeley.

Stukeley came to Old Carlisle during his northern tour of 1725; his account, first printed half a century later,¹⁶ deserves to be reproduced in full:—

¹² *Britannia*, 1594 ed., 599: "Praeter infinitas imagunculas, statuas equestres, aquilas, leones, & alia vetustatis testimonia plurima, quae quotidie occurrunt." In the 1600 ed., 700, "Ganimedes" are added after "leones," suggesting fresh discoveries noted in 1599.

¹³ 1600 ed., 698: "Situs ad explorandum commodissimus, colle enim satis aedito sedit unde circumvicina regio facile circumspici possit."

¹⁴ Described amongst stones from the Senhouse collection (1600 ed., 696), but specifically assigned to Old Carlisle.

¹⁵ Not 533, as a misprint in CW2 xxviii 118 makes it appear; Haverfield, as Collingwood pointed out, gave an improved reading of the text in *Eph. Epigr.* vii 966: the stone is still at Cunninghamth, where our member Mr R. P. Wright saw it in 1944.

¹⁶ *Itinerarium Curiosum* ii, 1776, 54.

"CASTRVM EXPLORATORVM.

Now called Old Carlisle; a mile off Wigton, upon an eminence: the fairest show of foundations I ever yet saw: one might almost draw an intire plan of it, and of every dwelling. The *castrum* was double-ditched, 500 foot from the south-east to north-west, 400 the other way: the wall has been dug up to the foundations; but the hollow where it stood on the edge of the rampart appears quite round, and the track of all the streets and buildings obvious. A street of forty foot wide quite round the inside of the wall. From the north-east entrance two Roman roads depart; one full north, as far as we could see, paved with coggles; on each side of it are the square plots of houses: the other road marches north-east, paved in like manner; it passes over two great moors, and there it is very apparent: we travelled along it to Carlisle. I saw a group of barrows near it. Many antiquities have been found at Old Carlisle, and inscriptions; one on the side of a house a mile off Wigton, as Mr. Gilpin told me: others are at Ilkirk.

There are several springs all round the bottom of the hill, and quarries; and an extensive prospect, especially toward the sea-shore. Some coal-works in our journey from Cockermouth hither. I doubt not but the Romans had knowledge of this subterraneous treasure, though they neglected it, because there was wood enough in their time: but Solinus mentions it among the wonders of Britain, that they burnt *globos saxeos* into ashes. I saw a silver Antoninus Pius found here; reverse, *vector orbis*."

This is first-rate reporting. Further ploughing since Stukeley's day, and a certain amount of stone-robbing, have obliterated the details of the buildings in the settlement outside the fort, and have somewhat obscured the internal details; but it is clear that the main stone-robbing had taken place long before, and it must have been the gaps left by the removal of walls, rather than upstanding walls themselves, which provided Stukeley with the basis for the detailed plan which, alas, he omitted to make. Special attention may be directed to the road leading northward, no doubt to the Wall at Drumburgh or Bowness on Solway, and to the rectangular buildings flanking it; nowadays there are no surface indications of buildings on this part of the site, though Mr Harold Duff has recovered a good deal of Roman material from it

after ploughing: it is south of the fort, and along the road to Carlisle, that surface indications, and still more air photography, show the greatest concentration of external buildings.

Horsley's *Britannia Romana*, published in 1732, is our next source. He identified Old Carlisle (rightly, as we may now affirm) as the *Olenacum* of the Notitia, and gave a good description of the site and its setting¹⁷:—

"The ruins of the old *Roman* town and station here are very grand and conspicuous. It stands upon a military way very large and visible, leading directly to *Carlisle* and the wall; and there is no other station upon this way between it and *Carlisle* or the wall. *Old Carlisle* is about a mile south from *Wigton*, about eight miles south-west from *Carlisle*, and about twelve or fourteen west from *Old Penreth*, and ten long ones east from *Elenborough*. The ramparts of the station lie two of them directly east and west, and the other north and south. There seems to have been a double *agger* quite round it. The river *Wiza* runs on the south and west sides of the station, about half a mile from it, and the descent to the river is steep; yet the out-buildings have been on all sides here, as well as at *Old Penreth*. From this station there is a very large prospect, especially westward, reaching the sea."

Horsley gives a plan of the fort, facing p. 113, but it is merely a schematic one, showing it as a rectangle measuring about 130 by 80 paces within its defences, which are represented as double ramparts and ditches, with entrances central in each side; the north point, if it refers to all the forts whose plans are given on the same plate, would make its main axis run from south-west to north-east, but that is probably the fault of Horsley's draughtsman: his text gives the correct orientation. He discusses the inscriptions from Old Carlisle later in the volume, p. 276 f., citing the seven which Camden had recorded, and adding the milestone of Crispus (Collingwood's no. 29 = C.1153) from the Cotton collection, though noting that its attribution to this site was merely

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, 112; reproduced verbatim by Warburton, *Vallum Romanum*, 1753, 120.

conjectural; from the fact that there had been no further discoveries of inscriptions at Old Carlisle since Camden's day, it seems reasonable to suppose that there had been something of a lull in the process of stone-robbing, but it was to set in again within a generation of Horsley's death.

In 1748, George Smith¹⁸ communicated to the *Gentleman's Magazine* an account of some Roman stones which he had found "in the wall and adjoining houses of an obscure farm at Coninggarth, about two short miles southward from Wigton": one of them is the fragment from an elaborate sculpture, *Lap. Sep.* 844, which is now in the British Museum, another shows the head and shoulders of a human figure in a semi-circular recess, no doubt the top of a tombstone, a third is one of those stone representations of a pine-cone which occur so commonly in Roman cemeteries, and the one inscription is Collingwood's no. 23, already referred to¹⁹; it looks as if all these stones, except perhaps the first, had come from a Roman cemetery east of the fort. Seven years later Smith reported the discovery of two Roman altars, Collingwood's nos. 10 = C.343 and 18 = C.352, "lately found by some workmen, as they were digging for the foundation of a ring-wall, against the common at Old Carlisle, about two hundred yards east of the station."²⁰ The altars, both of them mere fragments, come from dedications to Juppiter Optimus Maximus, such as were customarily set up—and later buried—by the side of a Roman unit's parade-ground, as Mr L. P. Wenham has pointed out²¹; it is useful to have Smith's careful account of their find-spot, which will one day deserve further investigation, particularly if our member Dr St. Joseph can secure air photographs to serve as a guide to locating

¹⁸ Cf. CW2 xlviii 135f.

¹⁹ The text of Smith's account is reproduced by Hutchinson, ii 406f., and the stones are figured on his plate facing p. 410.

²⁰ Text, Hutchinson ii 407; illustrations, plate facing 410.

²¹ CW2 xxxix 19f.

the pits in which other altars still await discovery. Smith proceeds to an account of the site:—

"The aggers, praetorium, ditches, and roads, belonging to this station, are still to be traced by their remains on this uncultivated common; and the *Alae Auxiliae* appear, by many scattered ruins, to have been encamped eastward a long way. Some doubt has been made, what was the ancient name of this place; Mr. Camden gives it no name, though he calls it a famous city; it is indeed most probable that he never saw it, for there are no remains of buildings besides the fort, of which the wall is here and there still to be seen, and some wretched huts, which seem to have been cobbled up by private soldiers, merely to shelter them from the weather; for the remains of them are of very bad stone, though there is a good quarry at a little distance, to which recourse would certainly have been had, if any regular edifices had been raised for more durable purposes, many of which there must have been to constitute a city."

He is obviously describing late and crude buildings, in the extramural settlement, like many of those examined in the settlement at Housesteads²²; it is hardly necessary to refer to his criticism of Camden's use of the term *city*, but we may note that he, like Horsley, is aware of a considerable built-up area outside the fort itself.

A further altar, this time substantially complete, was found "a few yards distant" from the two which Smith had recorded, in 1756; a note upon it was submitted to the same periodical by a T. Tomlinson, of whom I have found no other record²³; the inscription is Collingwood's no. 9 = C.342, and belongs to the same series of dedications from the parade-ground.

The number of inscriptions had thus been raised to eleven, including the milestone of Crispus; Hutchinson added three more. The first was the fragment of an altar, found on his visit in 1773 or 1774 "in an adjoining farm-yard . . . built into the horsing block"²⁴

²² Cf. AA4 xii 249f.

²³ Text, Hutchinson ii 408; there is a good illustration in *Lap. Sep.* 825.

²⁴ *An Excursion to the Lakes &c.*, 1776, 231. Nicolson and Burn have nothing fresh to add on Old Carlisle, merely quoting Camden and Horsley (ii 142f., 193).

(Collingwood's no. 12 = C.345); on the same occasion Hutchinson gave a good brief account of the site, in comparable terms to Stukeley's, so that it need not be quoted here, adding two points of interest²⁵:—

(a) "Within the vallum, towards the north, a well has lately been opened about three feet diameter, walled regularly with stone, around which are scattered fragments of brick, tiles and earthen ware."²⁶

(b) "The church of Wigton, and many of the buildings in that town, have been erected out of the ruins of this place; as appears by a kind of rude chequer work on the facings of the stone."

In his *History of Cumberland* (1794), Hutchinson was able to enlarge upon the latter point, for in 1788 Wigton old church was demolished, and "a new and elegant church built"; in the foundations of the old steeple was found part of a Roman tombstone (Collingwood's no. 25 = C. 356), which was promptly re-used in those of the new church, and another tombstone (Collingwood's no. 22 = C.354) which was fortunately preserved, to find its way ultimately to Lowther Castle.²⁷ On Old Carlisle itself, Hutchinson diligently collected and set forth the bulk of what Camden, Horsley and Smith had written about the site, and repeated the substance of his own earlier observations, but otherwise had little to place on record: a cinerary urn, obviously of Bronze Age type, found at Old Carlisle in 1791 by Mr Joseph Sandart "and now in the Possession of Mr. Matthews of Wigton", a very crude sculpture,²⁸ showing the head and shoulders of a human figure, "dug up by the ploughshare, in one of his fields at Old Carlisle" and then in the possession of W. Matthews (no doubt the same man), and some coins (one of which might have been of Severus or

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, 230.

²⁶ It may be suggested that this well was in the commandant's house, which in that case will have been on the north side of the *principia*, nearer the *porta principalis dextra* — if the fort faced west (cf. p. 33 below).

²⁷ Hutchinson ii 477 and plate facing 410.

²⁸ Hutchinson ii 409 and plate facing 410; it is not included in *Lap. Sep.*

Gallienus, "but this is merely ignorant conjecture"); he also described, and illustrated, a fragmentary inscription "in a wall near Old Carlisle", without realising that it was one of Smith's pair, now somewhat reduced in size.²⁹ The main point of interest is that the enclosures of 1755 had now come under the plough; that must have been the main reason for the gradual disappearance of all surface indications of the external settlement.

Our next source is the Lysons brothers' volume on Cumberland, published in 1816; its section on British and Roman roads and stations, and the Roman Wall, contributed by the Bishop of Cloyne, includes a brief and not very good account of Old Carlisle, to which the editors in a couple of footnotes added two useful points³⁰:—

(a) "The site of this station was purchased a few years since by the Rev. Richard Mathews (*sic*), of Wigton, who has discovered there several inscriptions and other Roman antiquities."

(b) "In the year 1811 a considerable portion of the wall on the east side of this station, was laid open for the purpose of obtaining ready hewn stone for some buildings on the adjoining farm. The remains of the gateway on this side were considerable, it was twenty-six feet six inches in width; that on the south side was twelve feet three inches in width, and near it the walls remained to the height of four feet eight inches; at two feet from the ground there was a set-off of nine inches. In consequence of these, and subsequent excavations, many Roman altars, coins, and other antiquities were discovered (*sic*), which will be noticed under the head of Miscellaneous Roman Antiquities."

In their chapter on Roman altars and inscriptions, pp. cxlix-clxxxv, the Lysons brothers list 16 items referable to Old Carlisle, but a cross-check shows that the true total is only 14, the two readings provided by the *Anonymus* being treated as separate texts³¹; only two of the inscriptions represent new discoveries:—

²⁹ Collingwood's no. 18 = C. 352, now at Tullie House; Hutchinson ii 410 and plate facing.

³⁰ P. cxliii.

³¹ The Lysons nos. are 1, 2, 3 = 21, 17, 30, 39, 66, 86 = 87, 90, 94, 126, 134, 138, and 140.

(a) Collingwood's no. 24 = C.355: "lately found near the station of Old-Carlisle, and is in the possession of the Reverend Richard Matthews of Wigton."³²

(b) Collingwood's no. 27 = C.358: not mentioned in Lysons' text, but in view of the passage quoted above, it was presumably discovered by Matthews.³³ His other finds at Old Carlisle are referred to on p. clxxxvi: —

"a small *patera* of the red Samian ware, not quite three inches in diameter; and what seems to have been a whetstone, about four inches and a half long, with a hole at one end, for hanging it by . . . A small rude female image of pipe-clay, and the sole of a sandal of leather, have lately been found at the bottom of a well about six feet deep near this station."

The drastic stone-robbing of 1811 had been a consequence of the passing in that year of an enclosure act,³⁴ which eliminated the last surviving common lands in the parish of Westward, and made it necessary to provide field-walls to mark the boundaries of the different properties; the site of the fort, as has been seen, passed into the hands of the Rev. Richard Matthews, who can hardly be blamed for permitting his tenant to win dressed stone from it, in view of the care which he plainly took to ascertain the dimensions of the two gateways then uncovered, and of the fort wall itself. During the next twenty years or so Mr Matthews continued digging (how intensively, our sources do not relate), and the Rev. John Hodgson was able to include in his account of the site, published in 1840,³⁵ three further inscriptions (Collingwood's nos. 1 = C.336, 15 = C.347 and 20 = C.351), while he communicated a fourth to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1842³⁶ (Collingwood's no. 13 = C.346).

³² *Op. cit.*, p. clxxxiii.

³³ Lysons no. 140 was seen by them in the Crosthwaite Museum at Keswick and "we were informed that it had been found in this county, but could not learn at what place" (*op. cit.*, p. clxxxiv); it is one of Hutchinson's two Wigton stones, Collingwood's no. 22.

³⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 166.

³⁵ *History of Northumberland* II iii 234-238.

³⁶ Vol. 18, 1842, 598-599.

We may add, as probably found by Matthews, three stones first published by Huebner from readings provided by Collingwood Bruce, who found and copied them at Wigton Hall, namely Collingwood's nos. 16 = C.348, 19 = C.349 = *Eph. Epigr.* VII 965 and 26 = C.357. In all, therefore, Matthews found nine out of the 29 items in Collingwood's list, and some of them give us texts of considerable interest; but he himself was disappointed with the results of his excavations; writing to Hodgson in January 1837,³⁷ he says: "Its site has been so completely ransacked, that, despairing of finding any thing worth the search, I have not of late dug up any part of it." However, he sent Hodgson "an accurate plan of the station and its suburbs, the windings of the Wiza round it, the antient roads that lead each way from it, and the present highway past it", and I have hopes that the plan may one day be located amongst Hodgson's voluminous MS. collections, now preserved in the Black Gate library in Newcastle upon Tyne. Mr Matthews also provided Hodgson with a copy of a small altar (Collingwood's no. 17 = C.350) which had been found "in this station" in 1803, under circumstances which are not recorded, apparently before he acquired the property.

The remaining inscriptions from Old Carlisle are due to chance finds, such as that of 1845 "in Mr. Stead's field adjoining the station"³⁸ (Collingwood's no. 4 = C.822), or the altar to Belatucadrus found, six or seven years before 1875 "near Greenhill, Wigton"³⁹ (Collingwood's no. 2 = *Eph. Epigr.* III 92), or the dedication to Hercules found in 1908 "about 100 yards from the Roman fort of Old Carlisle"⁴⁰ (Collingwood's no. 6 = *Eph. Epigr.*

³⁷ This letter and one written in the following month, are quoted in *Hist. Northumb.* II iii 235; there will be occasion to refer to the second letter later on, in considering the road-system.

³⁸ So Abbatt, *The Picts Wall*, 1849, p. 7 footnote.

³⁹ *Lap. Sep.* 831.

⁴⁰ So Haverfield in CW2 xi 472, from *Journ. Brit. Arch. Assoc.* 1908, 144; it is unfortunate that a more precise find-spot was not given.

IX 1128). But stone-robbing had come to an end, the site of the fort and much of the built-up area to the south of it had been stabilised as permanent pasture, and there was nobody to resume the investigations which Mr Matthews had suspended; Chancellor Ferguson, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and Haverfield and Collingwood in our own day, have stressed the importance of Old Carlisle and have looked forward to its excavation, but wars (and our Society's commitments on Hadrian's Wall) have prevented a start being made there, and at present there is no prospect of digging being practicable. Yet there have been occasional further discoveries, for most of which we are indebted to the watchful care of our Vice-President Mr Harold Duff⁴¹; the chance finds which he has been able to rescue, and in many cases preserve in the admirable museum at the Nelson School, in Wigton, provide the equivalent (in material for assessing the history of the site) of a fair amount of trial excavation.

It will be seen that the spoliation of the Roman ruins took place over a long period of years, reflecting in part the social and economic history of the Wigton district in medieval and modern times. First came the builders of Wigton church, soon after 1100,⁴² and no doubt of other buildings in Odard's lordship; the enclosures of the fourteenth century will have drawn on the same convenient supply of dressed stone, and in Tudor times there was renewed activity, attested by the *Anonymus* and by Oswald Dykes; and from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, the remainder of the common lands were enclosed and the new-won fields demarcated and the new farm-buildings erected with material dug from the fort or the civil settlement outside it. The story is a good deal more complicated than R. G. Collingwood

⁴¹ Cf. CW2 xxvii 118; xxviii 104; xxxv 282, 285 (the top of a tombstone which Mr R. P. Wright points out, JRS xxxv 90, to have been inscribed [*d.*] *m.*)

⁴² Cf. W. G. Collingwood in CW2 xxviii 96f.

realised,⁴³ but it has seemed worth while to set it forth, as an incidental contribution to the history of Cumberland.

I will conclude this section with a note on two or three inscriptions which have been assigned to Old Carlisle, but should probably not be retained under that heading:—

(a) Collingwood's no. 14 = C.335, cf. *Eph. Epigr.* III p. 128 and *Lap. Sep.* 826. This was at one time in Crosthwaite's museum in Keswick, whence it went to Lowther Castle; its attribution to Old Carlisle seems due to Bruce (I can find no other evidence for it): it seems best to leave the question open.

(b) Collingwood's no. 21 = *Eph. Epigr.* IX 1130. This is a Roman building-stone, found at Westward vicarage in 1901 and now at Tullie House; the inscription on it is probably a modern forgery, as Collingwood pointed out.

(c) The Cardewlees altar, *Eph. Epigr.* IX 1224, ploughed up in 1896, was further studied by Collingwood in 1923, and his reading may be found in our *Transactions*⁴⁴: he was then inclined to assign it to the *ala Augusta*, the well-known garrison of Old Carlisle, and to suggest that the stone had been taken thence for building purposes; but the fact that he did not list it in his paper in CW2 xxviii seems to show that he had abandoned that view by 1927. In any case, the reading proposed in 1923 is something less than satisfactory, and the attribution to the *ala Augusta* is quite uncertain.

In compensation, we may be justified in regarding C.942 = *Lap. Sep.* 517, found (in 1870) incorporated in the fabric of Kirkbampton church, as probably brought thither from Old Carlisle, like the inscription recorded by the *Anonymus*—whose "Banton" clearly means Kirkbampton, though it is more like six miles away as the crow flies—; it reads: *vex(illatio) leg(ionis) VI Vic(tricis) p(iae) f(idelis) fec(it)*, recording construction of some kind by a detachment of the sixth legion. Huebner followed Bruce in assigning this text to Burghby-Sands.

⁴³ Cf. CW2 xxviii 103.

⁴⁴ CW2 xxiv 88f.; cf. also JRS xii 278f.

§ 2. THE SITE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

Our starting-point in a consideration of the importance of the Roman fort must be a discussion of its garrison, the *ala Augusta* attested by seven of the inscriptions in Collingwood's list.⁴⁵ Haverfield and Collingwood, following McCaul, identified that unit with the *ala (Augusta) Petriana* of the Notitia; but, as I pointed out twenty years ago,⁴⁶ the identification cannot stand. The *ala Petriana* was 1,000 strong, too large to find room in the $4\frac{1}{2}$ acre fort at Old Carlisle; and in fact we now know that it occupied the large fort, nearly $9\frac{1}{2}$ acres in area, at Stanwix on the Wall, thus finally identified as the *Petriana* or *Petrianæ* of the Notitia.⁴⁷ The regiment at Old Carlisle must rather be equated with the *ala Augusta Gallorum Proculeiana*, the only *ala Augusta* in the army of Britain which did not possess the title *civium Romanorum*: but the inscriptions from Old Carlisle show that it had a greater claim to distinction, its title being the reward for valour—*ob virtutem appellata*; and before the time of Commodus, to which the earliest of its records here belong, it had dropped its original names, *Gallorum Proculeiana*, in favour of the honorific *Augusta*. As far as the Roman name of the place is concerned, that has now been adequately established as the *Olenacum* of the Notitia, and there is no need for me to discuss the matter further.⁴⁸

The first point which I would wish to make is, that Old Carlisle was the only cavalry fort on the western flank of Hadrian's Wall, and that the *praefectus equitum* in command there, being senior in rank to the prefects or tribunes of the cohorts at Beckfoot, Maryport and Moresby on the Cumberland coast or at Papcastle inland, was presumably in effect commander of the

⁴⁵ Nos. 4 = C.338, 7 = C.340, 8 = C.341, 9 = C.342, 11 = C.344, 20 = C.351 and 23 = C.353.

⁴⁶ CW2 xxxi 145f.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Handbook to the Roman Wall*, 10th ed., 1940, 198f.

⁴⁸ Cf. J. P. Gillam's convenient summary of the evidence, CW2 xlix 55.

district thus defined; it may be that he was also responsible for two further coastal forts as well, the lost site near St. Bees and the known one at Ravenglass. That is to say, we have a hint of a "western district", which could put a mobile force of one cavalry regiment and either four or six infantry battalions into the field if need be, to deal

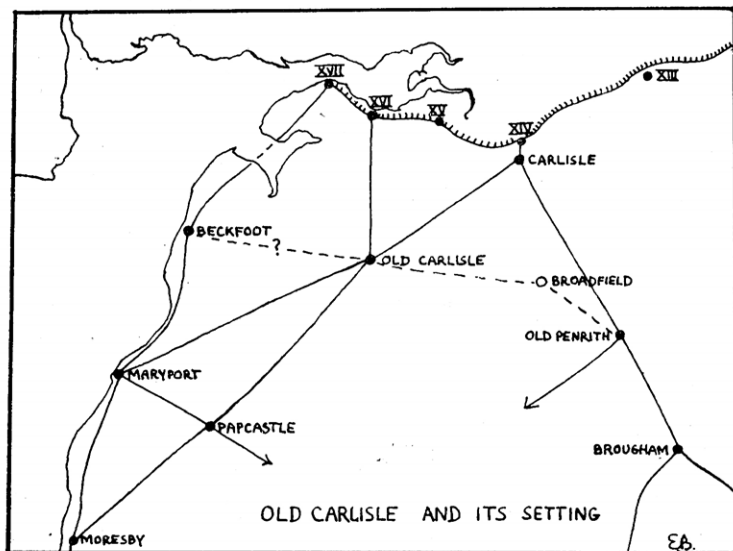
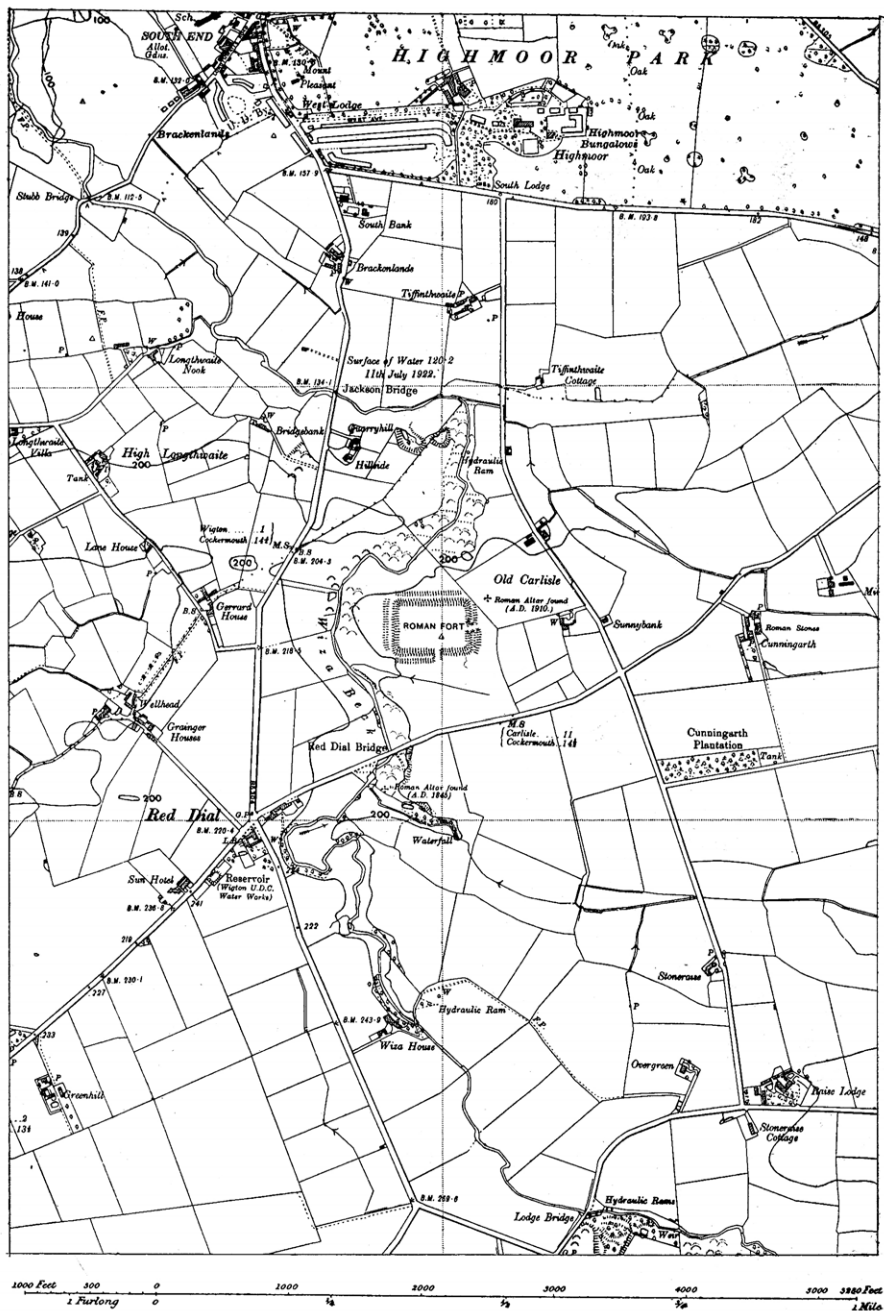


FIG. I

with some local emergency without waiting for assistance, or instructions, from Stanwix (where the senior officer of the Wall garrison was stationed) or from command headquarters at York. Such an arrangement was in fact postulated by Ferguson, though he did not appreciate the point that the seniority of the *praefectus equitum* is the strongest argument in its favour, and Haverfield's careful survey of the military geography of north-western Cumberland⁴⁹ does not miss the cardinal importance of this site.

⁴⁹ CW2 xx 143-146.



The fort itself stands up plain to see, for all that it has suffered at the hands of stone-robbers, and it would be possible to deduce the plan of its internal accommodation tolerably accurately, even if no further excavation were attempted there. Its size and its dimensions suggest that it is one of the Hadrianic series of cavalry forts: apart from the difference in orientation, it compares very closely with Hadrianic Benwell or Chesters.⁵⁰ To judge by the account which Richard Matthews gave to the Lysons brothers, the south gate of the fort, found in 1811, had only a single portal, as in the lesser side gates in the Wall-forts; its position, still discernable, nearer the east end of the fort, will indicate that the main side gateways were closer to the west end, and that the fort itself, like those along the Cumberland coast, was facing westwards; thus the position of the commandant's house (*praetorium*), deduced above from the discovery of a well shortly before Hutchinson's first visit, will have been that standardised in Hadrianic forts, between the *principia* and the *porta principalis dextra*, and the granaries will have been nearer to the main south gate, conveniently situated for receiving supplies brought by wagon along the trunk roads from south-west, south-east or north-east. Though the fort faced west, however (and Horsley deserves credit for noting that its westward prospect is best of all), its west gate, the *porta praetoria*, can hardly have had more than ornamental value; for it opened, like that of the Severan fort at Chesterholm, on to the edge of a steep declivity, down which not even the most routine-bound Roman engineer would have thought of attempting to construct an approach-road. For that reason, we may hope that in the latter part of the Roman occupation the gateway was completely walled up, like so many of those in the forts on the Wall, and that when it comes to be excavated it may prove to have preserved traces of the structural history of the fort comparable to

⁵⁰ Cf. *Handbook*¹⁰, pp. 49 and 83, for convenient plans of these two forts.

those which J. P. Gibson found at Greatchesters⁵¹; traffic for Papcastle and Moresby, or for Maryport, will in any case have had to leave the fort by one of its south gateways.

Whether the Hadrianic fort had a Flavian or Trajanic precursor has yet to be established; among the material from the site now preserved in the museum of the Nelson School, there is nothing that requires a pre-Hadrianic dating, but it must be remembered that that material has been turned up by the plough, and presumably comes from the upper levels of the external settlement. That settlement is in many ways far more interesting, and deserving of investigation by the spade, than the fort itself. For one thing, it seems to have occupied as wide a tract as any such settlement in our area; it is the only one to have produced epigraphic evidence for the existence of a village council, in the dedication to Juppiter Optimus Maximus and Vulcan for the health of the emperor Gordian by the *vik(anorum) mag(istri)*,⁵² and there is the hint, in the gloss on Nennius to which reference has been made above, that the site continued an important one well into the Dark Ages—it is not only for students of Roman Britain that further light on Old Carlisle is badly needed. The later emergence of a sub-Roman kingdom in Cumbria fully justifies R. G. Collingwood's suggestion that descendants of Romanised Britons lived on, at sites like this, long after all connections with the Roman government had been severed⁵³; and this site, free from the complications of later buildings such as seal the Roman and Dark Age levels at Carlisle, is by far the most promising one in the whole of our territory for the investigation of the transition from Roman Britain through sub-Roman Cumbria to Anglo-Norman times.

On the external settlement there is not much to be said

⁵¹ AA2 xxiv 27 and plate I.

⁵² Collingwood's no. 13 = C.346, now at Tullie House (CW2 1 177).

⁵³ Cf. CW2 xxiv 255; xxviii 110f.

at the moment, though there is promise of very much more in the near future. Collingwood believed that its main concentration was eastward from the fort, and he seems to have postulated that it was defended by a rampart of its own⁵⁴; but there are considerable surface indications of buildings, closely packed together, south of the fort, between it and the modern main road, and a recent air-photograph, taken by Dr St. Joseph in the dry summer of 1949, both defines these buildings and their relationship to the Roman trunk-road, here diverging from its modern successor, and shows a further considerable series south of the latter road; some of the buildings in that part of the settlement seem to have been of considerable size and importance. I hope that Dr. St. Joseph himself will before long communicate a paper on this and other air-photographs to the Society; meanwhile, it is good to know that he has been able to secure so important a guide to the further study of this key site.

Such a study may profitably be extended beyond its built-up area into the cemeteries, such as that which we have postulated near Cuningarth, or the parade-ground 200 yards east of the fort, and to the lines of communication which radiated outwards from Old Carlisle.⁵⁵ The trunk road from Carlisle south-westwards, past Old Carlisle and Papcastle to Moorsby on the coast, is well known and many sections of it are still visible; and Stukeley's account of the road leading due north from the fort, quoted above, is circumstantial enough, coming from an observer of his calibre, to command acceptance, though its course deserves to be investigated whenever an opportunity should offer. But there is another road, connecting Old Carlisle with Old Penrith, the case for which deserves to be set forth here, if only as a stimulus to some of our members to undertake a search for clear traces of it.

⁵⁴ CW2 xxviii 104-105.

⁵⁵ Ferguson's account in CW1 iii 75f. (substantially the same in his *History of Cumberland*, 1890, 43f.) is somewhat speculative, but still worth attention.

Our first source is George Smith. In a postscript to his letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1755 he wrote as follows⁵⁶:—

"There is a high Roman road, which has never yet been taken notice of, leading in a straight line from Plumpton fort (*i.e.* *Old Penrith*) to Ellenborough (*i.e.* *Maryport*): the stations upon it are four, Plumpton fort, Cast-Steads on Broadfield, Old Carlisle, near Wigton, and Ellenborough."

A second reference comes from the Bishop of Cloyne; referring to the two camps on Broadfield common, first mentioned by Smith and later examined by Hayman Rooke,⁵⁷ he notes that their situation was well adapted for a station between Old Penrith and Old Carlisle, "and the inhabitants contend there was a high raised way in that direction."⁵⁸ This is not very much to go on; and yet, if we remember the military functions which a cavalry regiment stationed at Old Carlisle will have had to perform, and the importance of its prefect in the military hierarchy of the Roman northern command, the provision of such a connecting link would seem a self-evident need, even if there were no eighteenth-century evidence for its existence. It will be worth while to remember a point made by Richard Matthews in the second of his letters to Hodgson⁵⁹:—

"The progress of cultivation and the construction of turnpike roads have utterly destroyed the Roman ways, excepting those immediately adjoining to the station, which, though they may still be traced, are so much dilapidated as to be scarcely discernable."

It is not always easy to realise how greatly the appearance of the Cumberland plain must have been modified

⁵⁶ The text is reproduced in Hutchinson ii 408.

⁵⁷ *Archæologia* ix 223f. (recording observations made in 1788); Rooke visited Old Carlisle too, and in 1790 made the following plea for investigations there (*op. cit.*, x 137): "At old Carlisle, the *Olenacum* of the Romans, the walls of many houses are now plainly to be distinguished, yet no search has ever been made: whereas by clearing away the earth to their foundations, all the dwellings and streets of this remarkable station would appear, and most probably many valuable remains would be found."

⁵⁸ Lysons, p. cxlvii.

⁵⁹ *Hist. Northumb.* II iii 235.

by the extensive enclosing, and the accompanying construction of new roads, that went on in the second half of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth; for those of us who cannot rely on aeroplanes for the purpose, it is now far from easy to obtain a comprehensive view even of many well-known lengths of Roman road which Horsley or George Smith could still ride along; but it is to be hoped that some of our members may be able to undertake, if only piecemeal, the investigation of a route which logic requires the Romans to have utilised.⁶⁰

On the history of Old Carlisle during the Roman period there is little that needs to be said. The main periods of its occupation may be supposed to have been similar to those of the Wall, with brief intervals of abandonment and destruction, soon made good, in 196/7, a century later, and then in 367; and there are only two points to remark on. The first is that some of the inscriptions of the *ala Augusta* belong to the time of Commodus, while others fall in the period 197 onwards, including one inscription best assignable to 197 itself.⁶¹ There is no other Roman fort in the north of Britain which has produced clear evidence for the same unit in garrison before and after the adventure of Clodius Albinus; one may perhaps be pardoned for wondering whether the explanation is not that the *ala Augusta* was left behind at *Olenacum*, when Albinus and his army crossed to Gaul, with its prefect charged with responsibility for the military administration of the north-west; and that it was allowed by Severus to retain its old station precisely because it had not taken any part in the civil war. If that was the case, a corollary might be that this fort had been able to

⁶⁰ Horsley, p. 409, writes: "there seems to have been no military way directly from *Old Penrith* to *Old Carlisle*"; but this comes as an argument against Dr Gale's attempt to make the second Antonine Iter run from sc. Maryport = *Blatum Bulgium* via Old Carlisle = *castra exploratorium* to Old Penrith = *Voreda*—and it does not seem to be based on any specific search for such a road.

⁶¹ Collingwood's no. 9 = C. 342.

keep its head above the barbarian flood which swept over the Wall and so many of the forts on its lines of communication in the winter 196/7, and that Old Carlisle may prove to show one destruction fewer than the other forts in our district, when a trial excavation does eventuate there.

The other point concerns the occurrence of *Olenacum* and its garrison in the Notitia. Elsewhere in this volume, Dr Kent argues that the Notitia does give a substantially accurate picture of Roman garrisons in the north of Britain in the period 395-410.⁶² As I see it, the arguments which he advances have great weight as regards the dating of the Notitia as a whole, provided that one excludes from consideration all its military detail (not merely that relating to the garrison of Britain); the objective student of the Roman army may be forgiven for refusing to believe that in the time of Stilicho, or even in that of Valentinian and Valens, it was anything like so large—or its frontier commands anything like so varied in their Order of Battle structures—as the Notitia purports to show. I still prefer to suppose that the military details were collected, from whatever old papers he could lay his hands on, and inserted into the document by a private student of Roman affairs⁶³; and as far as the section *per lineam valli* is concerned, I can see no compelling reason why Mr J. P. Gillam's view⁶⁴ should not be correct, namely that it represents the Order of Battle of the Wall area at the close of the third century, except in so far as some places and garrisons have been deleted—or omitted by a careless copyist. In any case, it must be remembered that in the closing years of the fourth century both Maryport and Brougham were still in Roman hands, as is attested by coins from the former site and pottery from the latter; yet neither of them

⁶² Cf. Art. II, p. 4f. above.

⁶³ Cf. my observations in CW2 xxxix 210.

⁶⁴ CW2 xlix 38f.

appears in the Notitia list. Old Carlisle does appear in the Notitia, but that is not the main reason for holding that it was still in Roman hands after 367. The best evidence for that is provided by scraps of Roman pottery salvaged by Mr Harold Duff, or by the logic of military geography, which compels us to suppose that Old Carlisle was not abandoned as long as Maryport was still held. The Nennian gloss will encourage us to suspect that it survived for many a long year after "the departure of the Romans", as a centre of sub-Roman civilisation in Cumbria.