ART. X. – *Excavations and Observations at Kirkby Thore*

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THE village of Kirkby Thore lies within the undulating farmland of the Eden valley, adjacent to the Troutbeck, a tributary of the Eden, and overshadowed to the north-west by the long, limestone escarpment of the Alston block of the Pennines. The south-western aspect of the village is delimited by the A66, the present incarnation of a main route through the valley and across Stainmore which has existed at least since the Roman period. The Roman route coexisted with a line of forts, one of which was sited at Kirkby Thore together with an associated civilian settlement or *vicus*. The area of Roman activity has remained largely unexplored and despite, or perhaps because of, the very limited information relating to the site, topographical features have been interpreted as signifying that the *vicus* evolved into a walled town (Birley 1949, 181). Even less is known of the origins and development of the medieval village. The name clearly indicates influence by the Scandinavian migration and probably signifies the renaming of an already well established settlement (Fellows-Jensen 1985, 341).

In September 1983 exploratory excavations were undertaken in the village, conducted by the Cumbria and Lancashire Archaeological Unit in response to an application to Cumbria County Council for outline planning permission for housing development. The proposed development concerned one field, area centred NY 6378 2574, to the north of the northern angle of the fort. The south-western end of the field had been included in the Scheduled Area of the Ancient Monument on the grounds that it contained part of the alignment of the defences of the town. The excavations were funded solely by the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England.

During the course of the excavations, watching briefs were undertaken to monitor construction work at two locations in the village. The excavations were planned to coincide with a Cumbria County Council project to widen the A66 Troutbeck bridge, and observations were also made at Bow Window Cottage. In 1985/6, observations were made during the construction of a house near the western corner of the field investigated in 1983 (Fig. 1).

The excavation

The field to be investigated was of irregular shape, enclosing an area of *c.* 0.67ha (1.65 acres) of permanent pasture (Fig. 2). Its south-western boundary coincided with the edge of the plateau, *c.* 119m above Ordnance Datum, on which the Roman fort was located. From this boundary the land sloped downward to the north-east, falling by *c.* 4.2m overall across two-thirds of the field (a gradient of *c.* 1 in 14) to a more level area which had a slight downward slope to the south-east. A linear earthwork in the form of a bank or terrace of *c.* 0.8m maximum height marked the foot of the field slope. Less prominent earthworks were visible in the higher part of the field: in the western corner there

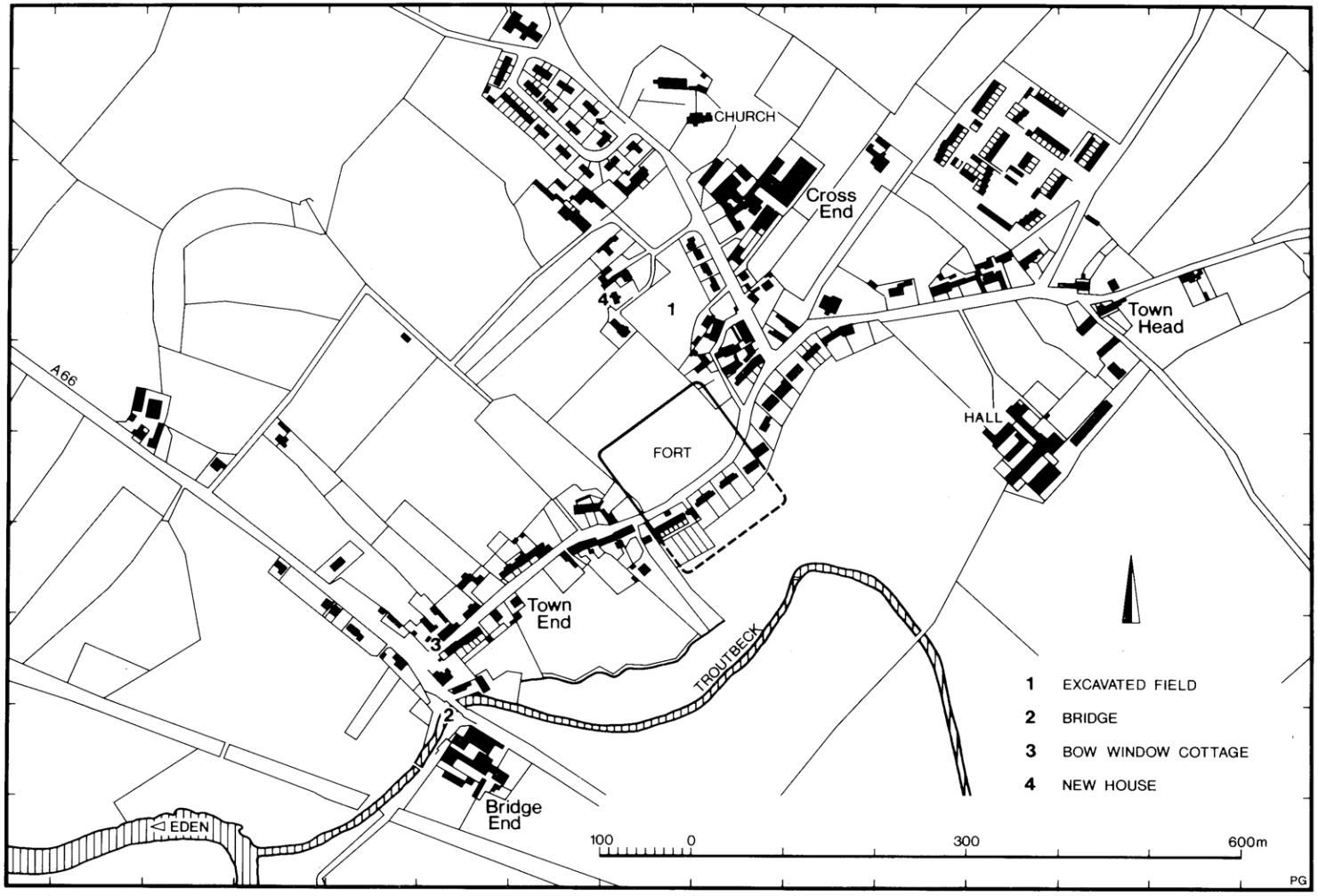

FIG. 1. – The village of Kirkby Thore showing the locations of the areas investigated.

was a shallow linear depression and in the southern corner the field slope was more pronounced.

Prior to the excavation, a geophysical survey had been undertaken by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory to assess the archaeological potential of the field. Significant geophysical anomalies were detected only in relation to the earthworks and modern service trenches and this was taken to indicate that no other substantial archaeological features were present, although it was considered that minor features or areas of shallow stratigraphy might occur. The survey report is included in the microfiche.

The strategy for the excavation was therefore simply that of sampling the field as widely as possible, giving priority to the earthworks and geophysical anomalies. To enable the anomalies to be relocated, the reference grid of the excavation was set out coincident with that of the geophysical survey. Eight trenches were opened which were ultimately reduced to six by the removal of baulks. The total area excavated was 184m^2, equivalent to 2.75% of the area of the field.

The geology of the area consisted of Permian sandstone overlain by Devensian glacial till. The excavation revealed that the subsoil within the field varied considerably, consisting for the most part of a sandy loam which in places contained bands and pockets of sand. A sandy clay, sandy clay-loam, and a loamy sand/gravel were also present and in the lower part of the field, layers of sand and silty sand were observed at a deeper level. Apart from the areas of sand and sandy clay, the surface of the subsoil was concreted, to a varying degree, with iron-pan. A description of the subsoil variations within each of the trenches is included in the microfiche. The overlying soil was of the Clifton Series, consisting, beneath the humic horizon, of a ploughsoil of grey-brown, sandy loam, containing only a few small stones.

In the following account only the principal features and contexts are described in detail; a summary of all the excavated contexts is included in the microfiche.

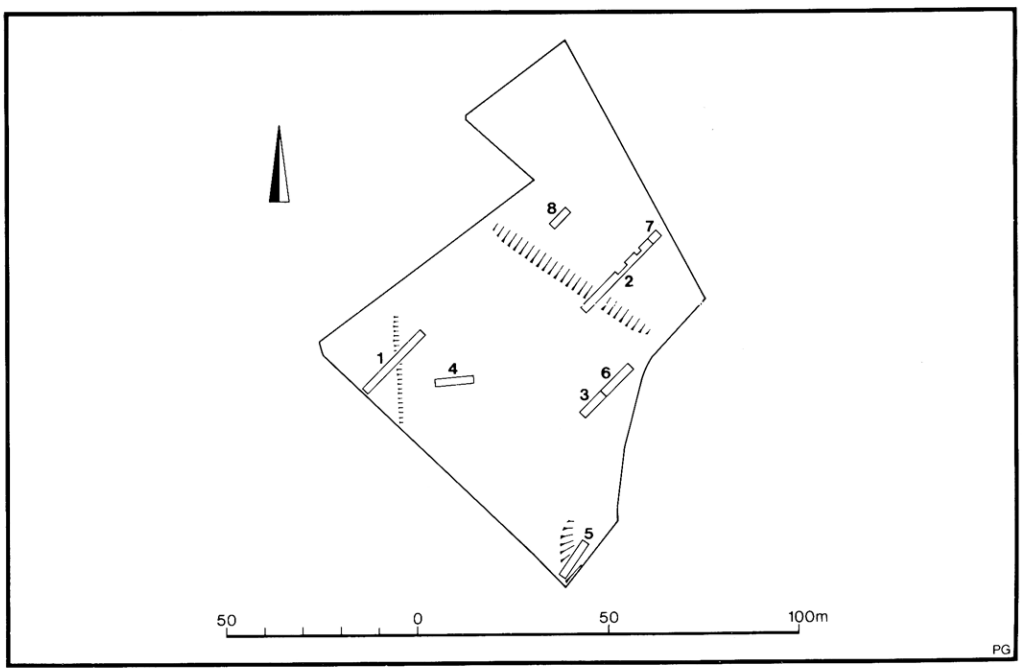

FIG. 2. – The locations of the trenches within the field.

Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

The trench was positioned in the upper field to section the shallow linear depression and to investigate for evidence of the town defences.

Medieval

The linear depression was resolved into a hollowed trackway, 115, cut or eroded into the subsoil with an uneven drainage channel aligned along its centre, and filled with ploughsoil. The fills appeared to signify a gradual silting, no doubt accelerated by

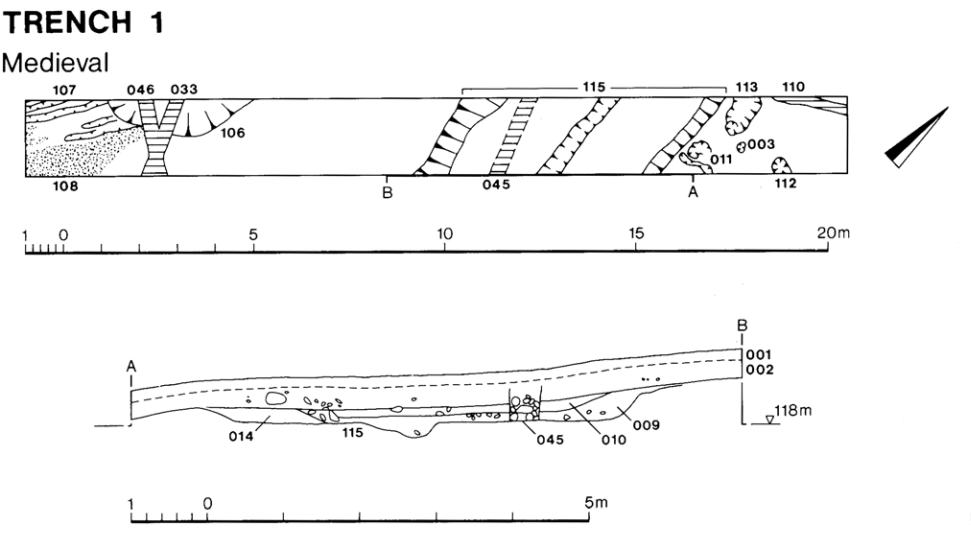

FIG. 3.

ploughing, and contained both Roman and medieval pottery with post-medieval material only present in the upper fill, 010. On the eastern edge of the trackway the subsoil was disturbed by tree root activity, 003 and 011 and two shallow hollows, 112 and 113, the latter also showing signs of tree root disturbance. None of these features produced any dating evidence. They were collectively taken to represent the remains of a hedgerow that had been destroyed, probably at the same time that the track had ceased to be of use.

In the highest part of the trench was a cobble surface, 108, consisting of one even layer of close-set stones, 3-12cm in size. The eastern edge of the surface appeared intact, although the area exposed was too small to allow any interpretation of the surface's function. In the absence of any dating evidence, the cobbles were categorized as medieval in that the complete lack of sand and gravel gave the surface a markedly un-Roman appearance. Part of the surface had subsequently been destroyed by plough-furrows, 107. Adjacent to the cobbles was a shallow intrusion, 106, devoid of finds. The relationship between 106 and the cobbles had been destroyed by a later intrusion, although it was considered that the cobbles were earlier. It was not possible to deduce a temporal relationship between 106 and the plough-furrows.

Post-medieval and modern

Features 045 and 046 were stone-lined field drains, with 046 being cut by a modern drain, 033. A shallow feature, 110, partially filled with cobbles, also appeared to be the remains of a field drain, although it was far less substantial than 045 and 046, and was probably antecedent to them.

Trench 2/7 (Fig. 4)

Trench 2 was positioned to investigate the earthwork in the lower field and was subsequently extended to join Trench 7.

Roman

Towards the south-western end of the trench the subsoil was cut by intrusion, 124, which had a shallow V-shaped profile, and fill, 088, devoid of finds. It was sealed by a substantial layer of light grey-brown, sandy loam, 066. This layer was not fully excavated, but on investigation was seen to increase in depth to 0.7m, at which point it overlay a layer of wet, dark grey clay, 132, which appeared to be part of the fill of a large intrusive feature, 137. Beneath 132 was a layer of clean, orange-brown sand, 138, that appeared to be the subsoil. The surface of 066 contained a lens of darker material, 065, which may have been part of the fill of 137 or of a later intrusion. It contained a squared block of red sandstone of 20×16×11cm size. Both 065 and 066 were sealed by a layer of grey-brown, silt-loam, 020, which appeared to be cultivation soil.

Any interpretation of this stratigraphy has to be tentative. Feature 137 may have been a substantial ditch, but was more probably an extensive pit, possibly utilized for the extraction of sand. It evidently became waterlogged before being completely filled and levelled with ploughsoil. Intrusion 124 may have functioned as a field boundary. Its relationship with 137 was uncertain, although it clearly did not survive the levelling of that feature. Of the small number of finds, only those from layer 020 were more precisely datable, the latest sherds being ascribed to the second half of the 2nd century (Fig. 14: 4, 5 and 6). The presence of dressed stone in context 065 suggests that it was deposited after the commencement of the rebuilding of the fort in stone.

Medieval

The linear earthwork was resolved into a 0.8m deep bank of ploughsoil, 006. This soil had evidently been denuded from the upper field during cultivation and had aggraded against a field wall of which only the footing, 064, survived. The wall consisted of cobbles up to 20cm in size in a matrix of ploughsoil, with an outer face composed of a single line of large rounded stones of 25-35cm size. The full width of the wall could not be determined because of a later intrusion, but was between 0.6 and 1.0m and appeared to be set into a foundation trench cut into layer 020. The wall produced no dating evidence; the aggraded ploughsoil contained both Roman and medieval pottery, the latter ranging in date from the 12th-13th to 14th-16th centuries.

Directly in front and parallel to the wall was a ditch, 123, with a rounded profile and a primary fill of grey, silty clay-loam, 122, devoid of finds. The upper fill, 087, contained a high proportion of cobbles and its surface formed an uneven channel made up of loose cobbles. Pottery from 087 included a fragment of a bung-hole cistern dated to the later

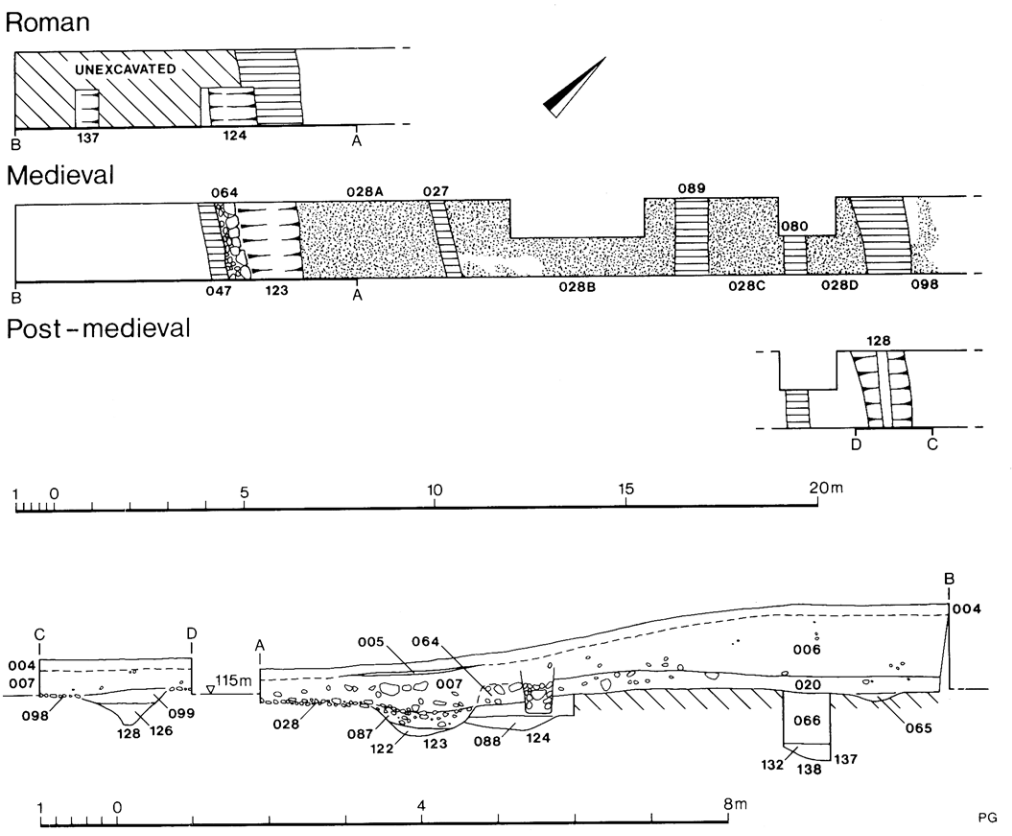

FIG. 4.

medieval period. This ditch had evidently functioned as a drainage channel, becoming silted under damp, if not waterlogged conditions, before being deliberately filled to form either a shallow channel, or a level area that had subsequently settled.

From the outer edge of the ditch, an even layer of close-set cobbles extended for *c.* 16.5m to a point where they faded out without any recognizable edge or demarcating feature. The cobbles, 028A-D and 098, averaged 5-10cm in size and formed a surface with a downward slope towards ditch 123 of *c.* 1 in 100. For most of their extent the cobbles were one layer in depth but within *c.* 3m of the ditch they comprised two layers, although it was not possible to excavate that area as two discrete surfaces. Across the edge of the ditch the cobbles were apparently contiguous with the generally larger and more random cobbles of 087. There was no clear evidence that the surface was associated with any structural features; its ploughsoil matrix contained a small quantity of both Roman and medieval material.

The wall, ditch and cobble surface presented the impression of being contemporary. It was not clear, however, how many phases of construction or use were represented, although the ditch demonstrated that there were at least two. At its simplest, all three were constructed simultaneously, with the ditch subsequently becoming filled, and the

accumulation of soil against the wall occurring gradually. The actual sequence of events may, however, have been more complex. At some point the wall collapsed or was destroyed, and its fabric was removed. The ditch was sealed by ploughsoil and debris from the wall, the pottery from 087 therefore provides a *terminus post quem* of the later medieval period for the formation of the earthwork.

Post-medieval and modern

Feature 047 was a stone-lined field drain. The cobble surface was cut by four intrusions of which only two were fully excavated: 027, a modern drain; and 128, a ditch of V-shaped profile which contained post-medieval material. The ditch appeared to correspond to a field boundary shown on the map of the Inclosure Award of 1820.[1] There was no evidence of an associated wall or hedge although the trench may have passed between adjacent post holes of a fence. The two partially excavated intrusions, 080 and 089, were identified as service trenches.

Trench 3/6 (Fig. 5)

The trenches were positioned to investigate two parallel resistivity anomalies and were subsequently joined.

Roman

Feature 040 was a deep, curving intrusion of U-shaped profile, containing a clean fill, 023, which included some cobbles, the largest of 45cm size. Beneath 023 was a 0.05m layer of finer material, 032. Both fills produced Roman pottery, the only datable sherds

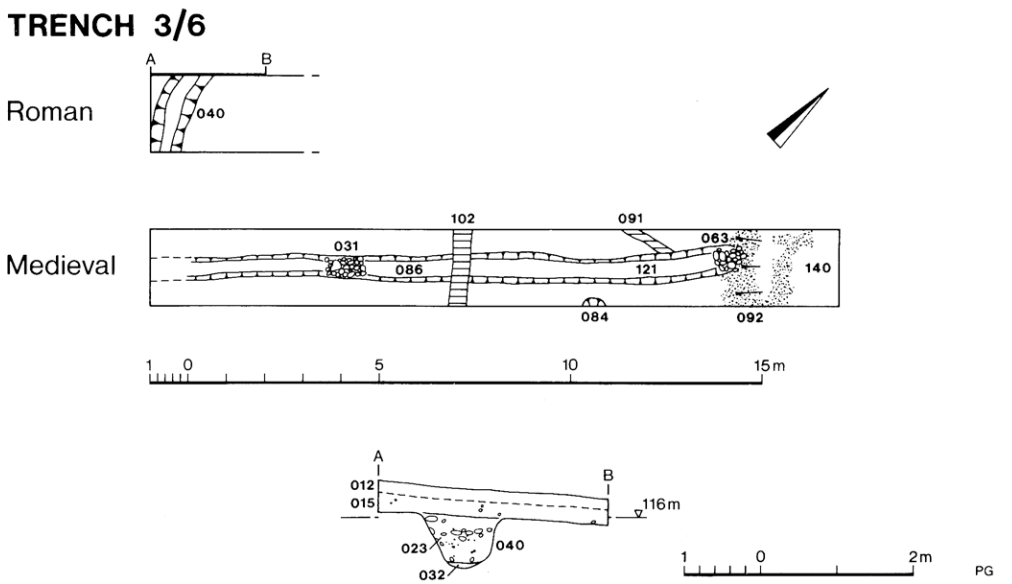

FIG. 5.

being fragments of samian from 032, attributed to the first half of the 2nd century. The steepness and unweathered nature of the profile of this feature were more in keeping with it being a pit or substantial foundation trench rather than a ditch. There was no indication that the stones within the fill had formed post settings.

Medieval

Aligned along the centre of the trench was the almost completely robbed foundation of a field wall of which two small areas of the structure, 031 and 063, remained *in situ*, consisting of rounded stones and cobbles, 5-25cm in size, in a matrix of ploughsoil and subsoil. The foundation trench, 086/121, was cut into the subsoil by between 0.12-0.2m and curved slightly to end on the edge of a shallow, flat-bottomed hollow, 140, cut or eroded into the subsoil and partially metalled with small cobbles, 092. The hollow was taken to signify the position of a field gate. The single artifact recovered from these features was a sherd of Roman coarseware from the wall foundation, 063.

Post-medieval and modern

Hollow 140 was filled and levelled (077). The upper fabric of the wall was completely removed, although it was not possible to relate that event to the levelling of 140. The wall foundation then became incorporated, either by accident or design, into a system of field drains by being linked with the stone-packed channel, 091 (similar to feature 110 in Trench 1). The foundations were cut by a shallow intrusion, 102, of V-shaped profile, and subsequently, most of the foundations were removed. All of this activity was associated with post-medieval artifacts.

Unphased

Obscured by the baulk was an indeterminate intrusion 084.

Trench 4 (Fig. 6)

The trench was positioned to investigate a linear magnetic anomaly.

Five features filled with ploughsoil and subsoil were revealed.

Roman

A shallow channel, 055, was aligned down the field slope, with its eastern edge cut obliquely by a narrow and uneven intrusion, 054. The stratigraphic relationship was corroborated by the pottery: 055 contained sherds of 2nd century date (Fig. 13: 6), including Hadrianic or early Antonine samian. The latest sherd from 054 was a fragment of a small flanged bowl of probable 4th century date (Fig. 13: 13); this feature also produced a fragment of a Dr. 29 samian bowl. Feature 059 was a substantial, vertically sided pit, with a primary fill, 058, of charcoal flecked, grey/orange sand. The pit was cut by intrusion 048, which contained cobbles ranging in size from 5-25cm. In this instance the pottery was less illuminating: both features contained fragments of Wilderspool mortaria of 2nd century date (Fig. 13: 16), and 048 contained an undiagnostic fragment of a Mancetter-Hartshill mortarium.

TRENCH 4

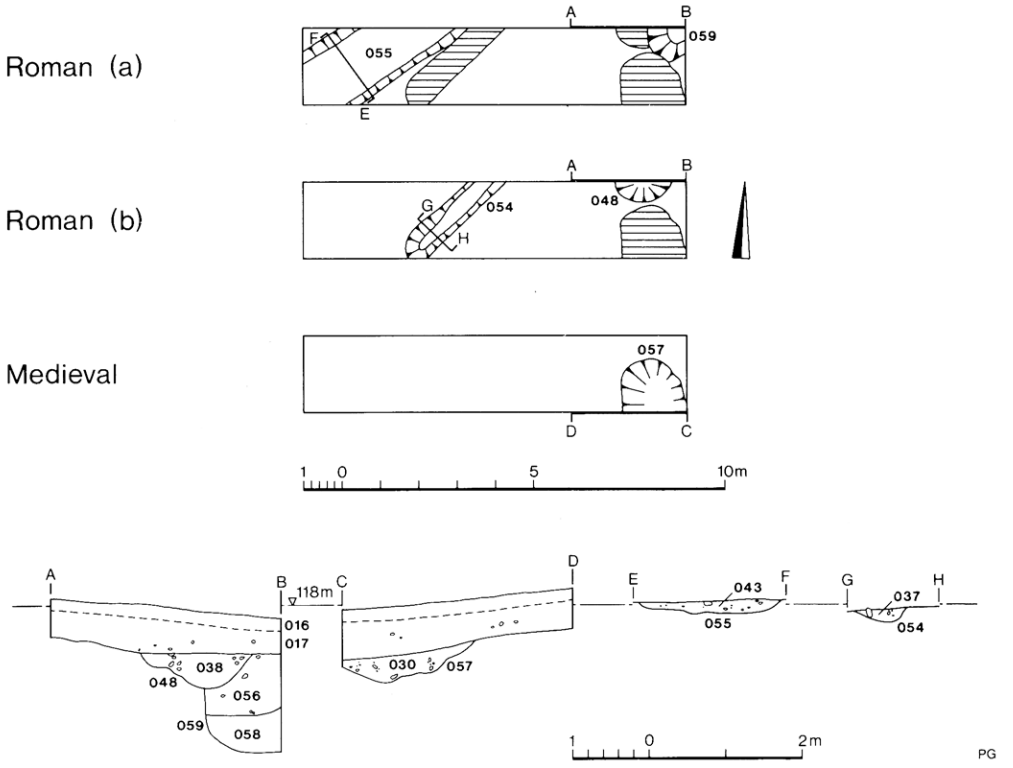

FIG. 6.

The function of the pit was unclear. Channel 055 appeared to be a field boundary and 054 may have had a similar purpose although it is possible that it formed part of the foundations of some form of structure. Intrusion 048 was possibly a post hole, and it is tempting to link it with 054 to conclude that they were two elements of a single structure, although it must be emphasised that this interpretation is purely hypothetical. There was no evidence of occupation layers, although it is possible that they could have been totally eroded by ploughing.

Medieval

At the eastern end of the trench there was an uneven pit or ditch, 057. It contained two medieval sherds of probable 12th-13th century date, together with thirty-seven Roman sherds which formed, paradoxically, the largest amount of Roman pottery recovered from one feature during the excavation (Fig. 13: 2, 7, 10 & 12).

Trench 5 (Fig. 7)

The trench was positioned in the corner of the field nearest to the fort to investigate for the presence of defensive features.

TRENCH 5

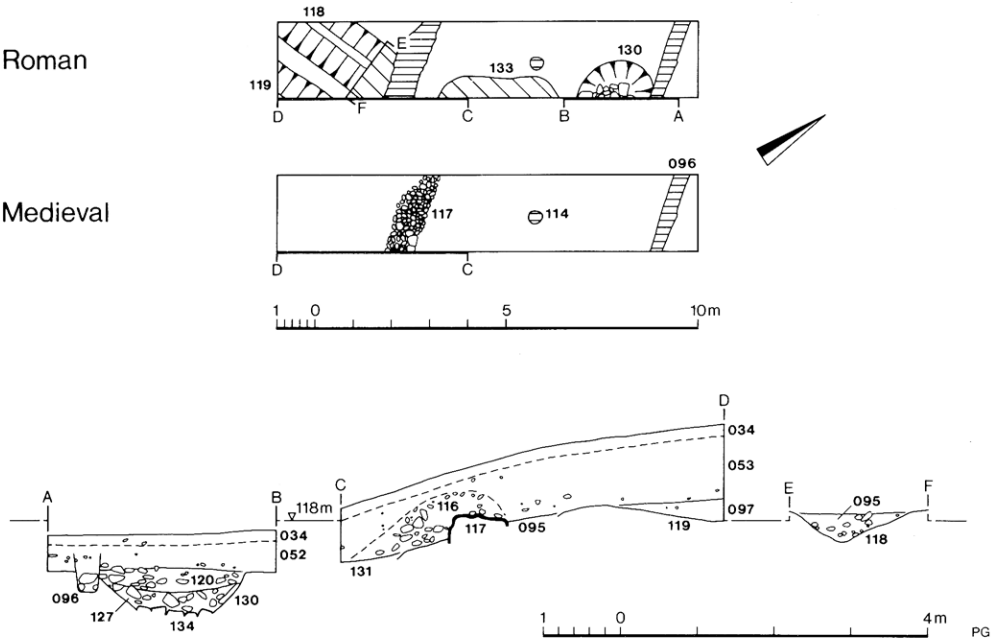

FIG. 7.

Roman

The surface of the subsoil at the south-western end of the trench was *c.* 1m higher than at its north-eastern end. The highest part was cut by two parallel, shallow ditches, 118 and 119, of which it was possible to excavate a complete profile of only 118, which was V-shaped, 1.5m wide and 0.4m deep. Ditch 119 appeared to have a similar profile and was 0.3m deep. They had identical fills consisting mainly of redeposited subsoil. The continuation of 118 to the east of the later intrusion 117, could not be established and whilst the ditch may have ended beneath 117, it is possible that the subsoil had subsequently been eroded in that area. The ditches were presumed to have formed part of the fort's defences. The only datable pottery came from 118 and consisted of three fragments of late 2nd century samian.

Also partially revealed were two stone packed features, 130 and 133, of which only 130 was excavated to any extent. It contained three fills, the lowest, which was not excavated, consisted of a compacted mass of angular or roughly squared, red sandstone blocks. The upper fills contained a high proportion of cobbles and stones, with 127 also containing two squared blocks of sandstone, 30×20×10cm in size, and the latest pottery: a sherd of samian of Antonine date. This feature had the appearance of a back-filled well. The unexcavated feature, 133, appeared to be a shallow pit. It produced a rim sherd of a jar in Huntcliff Ware of late 4th century date (Fig. 13: 19).

Medieval

The steep slope of the ground surface at the south-western end of the trench was resolved into a 0.85m deep bank of ploughsoil, 053, which had aggraded against a field wall of which only the footing survived beneath a layer of dislodged stones, 116. The wall foundation, 117, which was not excavated, consisted of cobbles and angular stones averaging 10-20cm size, in a ploughsoil matrix, packed into a trench varying in width from 0.4 to 0.8m. Some of the angular stones, including a squared block of sandstone of 30×20×10cm size, were utilized as a facing on the eastern side of the wall. No dating evidence was recovered from the wall. The aggraded soil, 053, produced Roman and medieval pottery, the latter ranging in date from the 12th-13th to 14th-16th centuries. At some point the wall had either been destroyed or had collapsed and its fabric almost wholly removed.

Post-medieval and modern

Feature 096 was a stone-lined field drain, feature 114 a small post hole.

Trench 8 (Fig. 8)

The trench was positioned to test whether the cobble surface revealed in Trench 2 extended to the north-west.

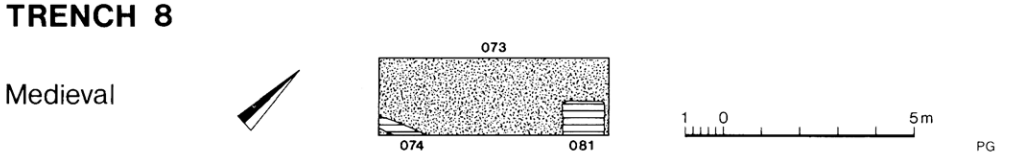

FIG. 8.

Roman

The medieval stratigraphy was not removed. No earlier features were observed in the cuts of later intrusions.

Medieval

At a depth of 0.35m a layer of cobbles, 073, was revealed which fully resembled the cobble surface 028 in Trench 2.

Post-medieval and modern

Between the topsoil and ploughsoil were two layers of redeposited material (068 and 069). These layers and the cobble surface were cut by two intrusions: 074, a modern drain, and 081, which was not fully excavated, but may have been associated with service trenches or field boundaries.

Observations

Kirkby Thore bridge NY 63545 25300

The bridge widening was monitored for two reasons: the course of the main Roman

and medieval road through the Eden valley is, at Kirkby Thore, taken to be coincident with the route of the A66, but the position of the earlier course of the Troutbeck, and consequently the positions of bridging points or fords, are not known. Secondly, the existing bridge was constructed in 1838 to replace a stone bridge that was in danger of collapse. The demolition of the earlier structure exposed a concreted mass of Roman artifacts built into the fabric of its eastern pier. The objects were, in the main, of copper alloy, and included coins, brooches, implements and small statuettes; some iron objects were also present (Smyth 1846). This unusual and important discovery defies any simple explanation (Shotter 1978, 21-2) and but for the observations made by W. Smyth, even less would be understood. Smyth, however, unfortunately left some pertinent details unrecorded: it is not clear whether the old bridge was completely demolished in 1838, which leaves open the question of whether all the artifacts were recovered from the structure at that time and it is also unclear how the new bridge was positioned in relation to the old one. Smyth states that the old bridge was 'ill-placed' (1846, 281), which may imply that it was not in alignment with the road and therefore in a different location to its successor. It was anticipated that the widening operation might provide answers to some of these questions.

The construction work consisted of widening the bridge by 2.6m by the addition of reinforced concrete piers and beams to the southern side of the existing structure. Sheet piling was driven into the bed and banks of the Troutbeck to create coffer-dams adjoining both piers of the bridge, and the enclosed areas were then excavated to accommodate the new foundations. Associated work included kerbing and walling, and the resurfacing of the road.

Although the methods employed in construction placed limitations upon observation, it was clearly evident that no trace of any preceding bridge structures of either wood or stone construction were present, neither was there evidence of a paved or metalled ford. The heavy build-up of humic soil against the piers lay directly over a gravel subsoil. There was a total absence of both archaeological stratigraphy and any finds predating the 19th century. None of the associated construction work created disturbances deep enough to reveal archaeological stratigraphy.

Bow Window Cottage NY 63530 25375

The cottage lay at the south-western end of Main Street, near its junction with the A66, and within the area described by antiquarians as producing evidence of Roman occupation. Medieval occupation was also presumed in the area, although it would appear that only Roman stratigraphy and finds have been observed: T. Machell recorded the discovery of a Roman well near to the Troutbeck, beneath a layer of 'gravel and pavement about a yard (0.9m) thick' (Machell 1684). The trench of the 1970 Sewerage Scheme, which in that area followed the alignment of Main Street, revealed a gravel layer *c.* 2-3 feet (0.6-0.9m) thick, 'near to Bridge End' (Plowright 1970, 34). The garden of South View, the neighbouring property to the south-west had produced 'considerable finds' in recent years (Plowright 1970, 49).

The principal structural alterations to the cottage consisted of the replacement of the foundations of the south-west facing external wall. The wall was completely demolished and its foundations removed by machine excavation with the resulting trench remaining open for only a few hours.

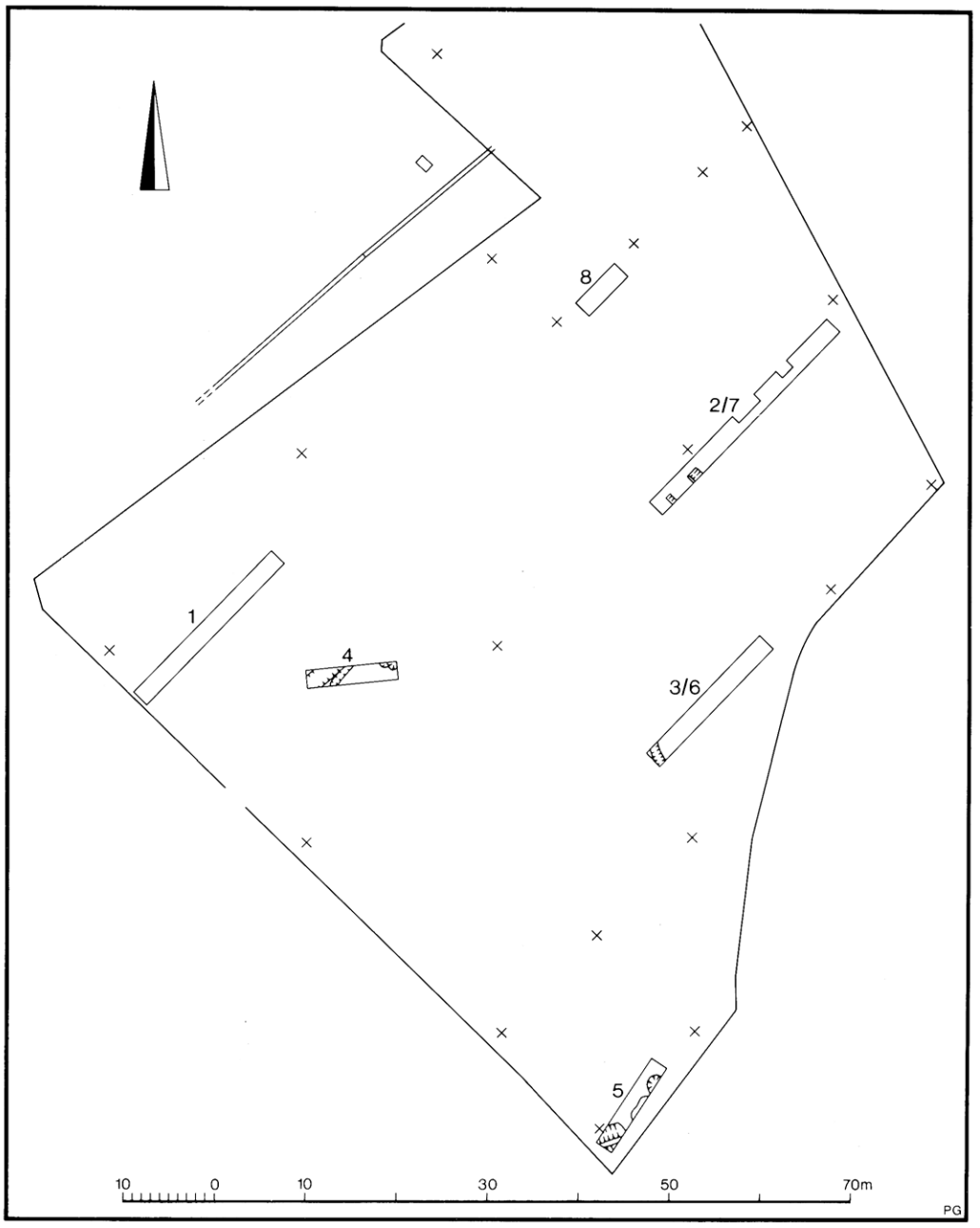

FIG. 9. – The relative positions of the Roman features.

The trench was excavated to a depth of *c.* 0.9m below the level of the cottage floor. It was only possible to record the stratigraphy exposed in the eastern half of the north-eastern side of the trench, and its south-eastern end. The remaining sides were obscured by loose debris, too unstable for investigation, but which appeared to form, in part, the

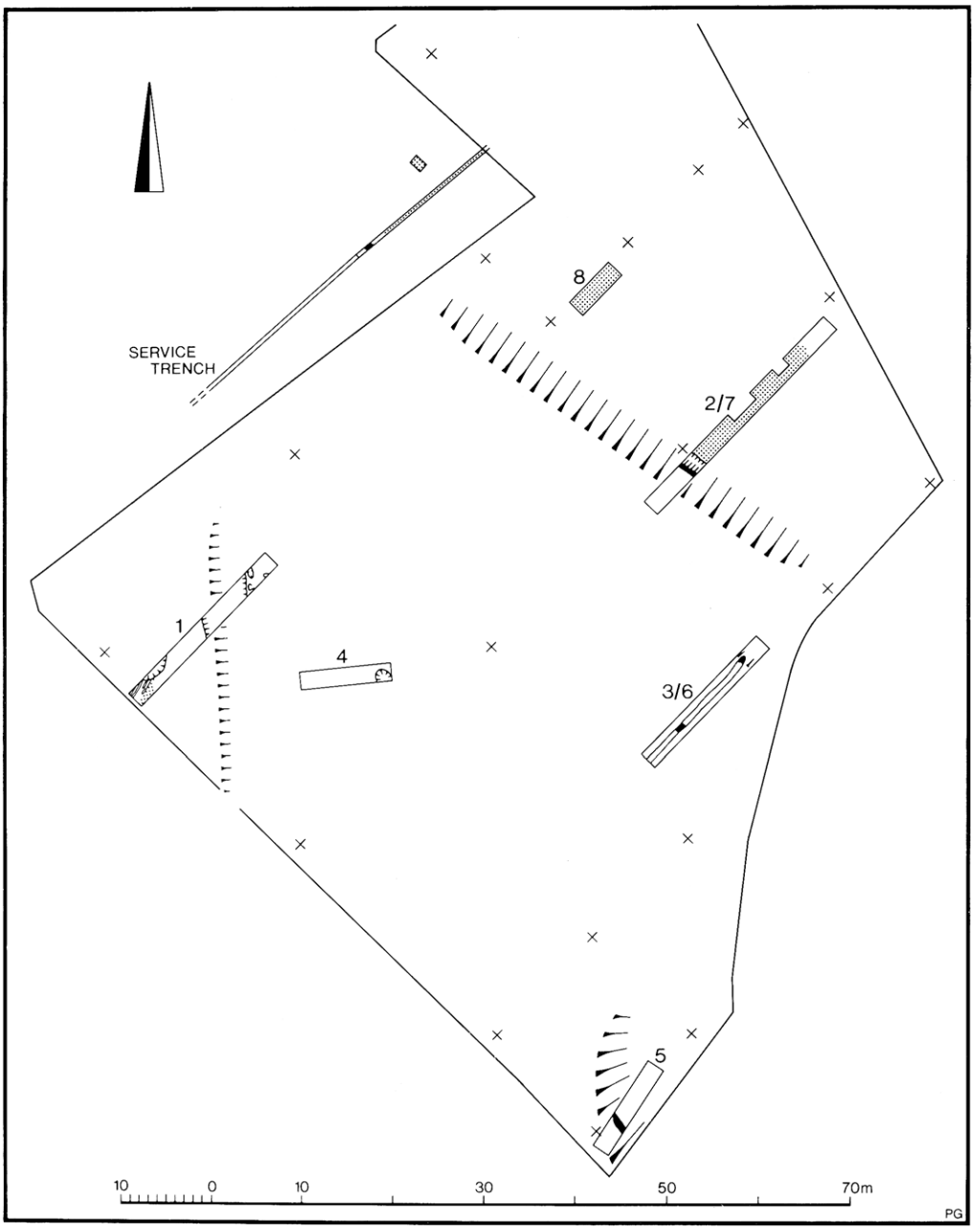

FIG. 10. – The relative positions of the medieval features.

fill of a large, shallow pit. The entire cottage structure rested on a layer of cultivation soil. The process of cultivation had apparently truncated, by the creation of a horizontal surface, an underlying sequence of at least four layers, having an overall depth in excess of 0.35m and in part overlying a clean, orange/red sand, which had the appearance of

undisturbed subsoil. There was no evidence of either structural features or intrusions, although a dip or slump in the stratigraphy towards the centre of the trench may have indicated the presence of a substantial intrusion antecedent to the observed stratigraphy. An illustrated description of the stratigraphy is included in the microfiche. A single sherd of pottery of late medieval or post-medieval date was recovered from the cultivation soil. The absence of finds from the underlying layers makes it impossible to provide a date for any part of that stratigraphy. The build-up of cultivation soil, assuming that it had been created *in situ*, could be indicative of a long period of agrarian or garden usage prior to the construction of the cottage. Two of the layers contained a high content of carbonized material which could signify either manufacturing activity or destruction in the vicinity.

Although the absence of dating evidence was disappointing, the observation of a further area of substantial stratigraphy serves to emphasize the archaeological importance of that area of the village.

The new house NY 63717 25748

Work commenced in 1985 on the construction of a house on land adjacent to the field investigated in 1983. Observations were made of the foundation trenches and of a service trench cut parallel to the north-western boundary of the investigated field to connect with the main sewer.

The foundation trenches were devoid of archaeological stratigraphy although the surface of the subsoil was extensively disturbed. Two intrusions were clearly identified, one of which, a pit, appeared to be of recent date. Three unstratified sherds of pottery were found, consisting of two fragments of samian and part of the strap handle of a medieval jug. A more comprehensive account of these observations is included in the microfiche.

The service trench (Fig. 10), provided no clear evidence that the hollowed trackway, 115, of Trench 1 continued to the north. The earthwork investigated in Trench 2 did not continue beyond the boundary of the field, but where the service trench crossed its alignment, it cut through a wall footing at a depth of 0.7m. The structure was 0.9m wide and consisted of rounded stones of 5-20cm size in a matrix of ploughsoil, with one large, rounded, facing stone of 50cm. This feature was taken to be a continuation of wall 064 in Trench 2. Tumbled stones were present in the adjacent ploughsoil, and the subsoil to the immediate east of the wall appeared to be cut by a ditch, although the resolution of that area was not possible. A layer of cobbles appeared to extend from near the wall for *c.* 16m up to the field boundary and cut of the main sewer. To verify the presence of the cobbles, a small rectangular hole, 1.5×1.0m, was excavated to the north-west of the trench, between fruit trees growing in the area, to expose the layer horizontally. A very uneven surface was revealed at a depth of *c.* 0.5m, consisting of a single layer of cobbles averaging 5-10cm size. The surface was comparatively poorly preserved and had evidently been extensively disturbed by root activity. It produced one small sherd of medieval pottery.

Assessment

In addition to providing a wider interpretation, by phase, of the excavated features,

this section goes beyond the direct results of the excavation in being concluded with an assessment of the evidence for a Roman town at Kirkby Thore.

The excavation effectively resolved the earthworks within the field, although in all the trenches negative features were revealed for which it was possible to provide only tentative interpretations. Some of the negative features could have been resolved and further stratigraphic relationships established by the simple expedient of extending the trenches, had this not been precluded by the imperative to sample the field as widely as possible. The problems of interpretation are compounded when any attempt is made to establish relationships between the features in different trenches. The data provided by the geophysical surveys was of insufficient contrast to complement the excavated evidence by giving some indication of the extent of the less substantial features. Moreover, the absence of features corresponding with the less pronounced geophysical anomalies specifically investigated in Trenches 3/6 and 4 serves to emphasize the difficulties which can be encountered in interpreting such data. If the limitation placed on the dating evidence by the relative absence of horizontal stratigraphy is also taken into account, it becomes clear that the phases of features observed within individual trenches cannot be effectively correlated to provide a sequence of phases for the field, beyond the broad division of Roman and medieval. Having outlined the general problem, it is still possible to make a number of observations which go some way towards uniting the elements of the site.

Roman

The rescue excavations undertaken by D. Charlesworth in 1961, were the first recorded excavations to have taken place in the village since those of T. Machell in 1687 (N. & B. 1777, Vol 1, 379) and they therefore provide a large element of the basic chronology of the site. The main area investigated in 1961 included part of the north-eastern defences of the fort and adjacent areas of its interior (Fig. 12). It was established that a turf and timber fort had been constructed during the Flavian period to be destroyed *c.* A.D. 120-125, and succeeded by a fort of stone construction, the rampart of which was set on the same alignment, but *c.* 36ft (11m) outside that of the earlier fort. The pottery ranged in date from *c.* A.D. 80 to the late 4th century (Charlesworth 1964).

The excavations of 1983 established that the area of the field lay outside any foci of civilian occupation associated with the forts. They revealed a miscellany of features consisting of ditches, field boundaries, pits, possible structures and a probable well, of which, only the two ditches in Trench 5 could be more closely related to the fort. The ditches are interpreted as part of the defences of, probably, the later stone fort, being located *c.* 26m from the estimated position of the fort wall. Neither of them would have constituted a substantial obstacle, although a full appreciation of their function requires an understanding of the overall layout of the defences. They do not necessarily form the outer limit of the defences as it is possible that further ditches could lie to the north of Trench 5. In the same trench, the probable well and pit demonstrate the presence of some *vicus* activity on the north-eastern side of the fort, evidently encroaching on to the defences, and the fragment of Huntcliff ware from the pit is significant in indicating the possibility of extra-mural activity occurring in the late 4th century. The main area of the field is interpreted as containing features relating to an agrarian use of the land, where 'agrarian' is defined as including both arable and pasture. The shallow channels

of Trenches 2 and 4 indicate the remains of field boundaries, devoid of their associated banks, and the possible structures of Trenches 3 and 4 are taken to be evidence of fences or perhaps, isolated buildings. One of the features in Trench 4 also contained a sherd of probable 4th century pottery. Part of the area of Trench 2 was possibly used for sand extraction and the filling and levelling of the disturbance would appear to show that the ground had subsequently been reclaimed for agriculture. The carbonized plant remains present in the soil samples taken from some of these features included a high proportion of seeds derived from cereal crops, with barley and oats predominating, although no cereal species specific to the Roman period could be confidently identified. The full report on the plant remains is included in the microfiche.

The extent of agrarian utilization of the land immediately adjacent to the forts and *vici* of the north-west is poorly understood, principally through an absence of excavated evidence, although aerial photography may have increased an understanding of some sites (Higham and Jones 1975, 24-7). The issue is interwoven with a number of far wider considerations including the function of the *vici*, the economic impact of the Roman occupation, and the logistics of the military food supply (Manning 1975, Breeze 1982, Casey 1982, Higham 1982, Jones 1984, Sommer 1984). There may have been no strategic imperative for forts to attain, within the military *territorium*, any degree of self-sufficiency in their basic food requirements. However, even a minimalistic view of land use has to accommodate the need of both the military and *vicani* to contain and pasture livestock, particularly if the fort held a unit of cavalry. The limited cultivation of some crops, if only for animal feed, would have required a more active involvement, but the availability of military manpower may have been a deciding factor in the matter. It is probable that the remains of land divisions and stock enclosures relating to a direct military use of the land are to be found adjacent to most of the forts and *vici* in the north-west. A recent watching-brief undertaken at Moresby during the laying of land-drains in a field to the south-east of the fort and *vicus*, revealed a small number of hollows, U-shaped gullies and V-shaped ditches (Bennett *et. al.* 1980). At Kirkby Thore there is some evidence for the presence of such features in one other location. One of the trial holes dug on the site of the Telephone Exchange (Fig. 12), in 1971 revealed a shallow intrusion of *c.* 0.4m depth, containing a fill of mixed ploughsoil and subsoil above a lens of cobbles and charcoal that produced sherds of Roman coarseware.[2] Such features may, therefore, be present over a wide area to the north-west of the fort and *vicus*. That they appear to be too insubstantial to be detected either by aerial photography or geophysical survey implies that the attainment of a more complete understanding is remote.

Post-Roman/early medieval

In the consideration of the factors limiting the interpretation of the excavated features, the problem of the occurrence of residual pottery was only indirectly stated. The implications of the problem are, however, of major importance. From the end of the Roman occupation until the commencement of the production of pottery in the 12th century, the north-west sustained populations which made little or no use of ceramics in their culture (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 69). At Kirkby Thore, where pre-12th century occupation is virtually certain (Fellows-Jensen 1985, 341), archaeological features, and even complex sequences of stratigraphy of that period, would have a very high probability of containing only residual Roman pottery. The correct phasing of the

features therefore devolves upon the identification of parallels for their forms from sites that have been more extensively excavated and understood. In applying this method to the features ascribed to the Roman period, only the fort ditches and the probable well have forms that are identifiably Roman; none of the other features have forms that are recognizably period specific. Those features have been phased as Roman on the primary assumption that their dating evidence is valid; it has to be acknowledged, however, that some or all of them may, in fact, belong to the post-Roman/early medieval aceramic phase of the settlement.

Medieval

The most clearly recognizable medieval features of Kirkby Thore are the Parish Church of St Michael, a 12th century structure with 13th-14th century, and later, additions (*RCHM Westmorland* 146); and Kirkby Thore Hall, the core structure of which is a 14th century manor-house (Brunskill 1956, 75-9). The medieval village appears to have developed in two parts, separated by the site of the fort which occupies a ridge of slightly higher ground. The Town End part was described in the early 13th century in a Charter of Alan, Lord of Galloway, as including:

> 'tofts and crofts which are between Whelp's Castle [the site of the fort] and the mill, and one toft and croft on the other side of the road [the A66]' (Ragg 1917, 228).

It seems that the area of the fort was avoided because of its ruinous state and its greater value as a quarry, although only excavation will establish whether it was utilized as a medieval defensive work or at any time contained dwellings linking the two parts of the village. The village retains only vestigial evidence of croft boundaries.

The most significant aspect of the excavated medieval features is that none of them bear any relation to the present-day plan of the village, indicating that a considerable evolution of land divisions has occurred in the area of the excavated field. The one event with some location in this evolution is the destruction of wall 064 which occurred during or after the late medieval period. The latest pottery from the associated bank, 006, was of 14th-16th century date, but as the vertical positions of the sherds were not recorded, it was unfortunately not possible to provide a relative date for the commencement of the formation of that feature. A comparison of the depths of the latest sherds from within the banks 006 and 053, may also have provided some basis for a relative phasing of those features. Although the foundations of the three walls differed in form, it was not possible to resolve whether that was equivalent to their differing in date. Wall 064 consisted of much larger stones which may indicate that it was the earliest boundary. The plough furrows in Trench 1 were aligned at right-angles to 064 and it is therefore possible that the two were directly related. If this is correct, then the eroded cobbles in Trench 1 would be part of a preceding phase of the landscape. In either case, the area of Prospect House (Fig. 12), shows evidence of some form of medieval structural activity, although the presence of a building is not certain.

The understanding and interpretation of the trackway, 115, and the wall and bank, 064 and 006, was aided considerably by their visibility as earthworks. The course of the trackway could not be established beyond the field and, similarly, the alignment of wall 064 and the associated cobble surface, 028, was also uncertain. To the south-east the

cobbles align with the present road junction, and their extension in that direction is borne out by the discovery and destruction, *c.* 1930, of a 'paved causeway' in gardens being laid out north of Prospect Terrace,[3] (Fig. 11). To the north-west, the narrow strip of pasture between Croft House and Piper Croft shows the continuation of the natural slope of the land, but no evidence of an earthwork. The north-eastern end of the pasture has been utilized as a kitchen garden[4] and this activity could have removed any surface traces of former land divisions.

The Inclosure Award of 1820 included the division of the remaining common land within the village, all of which was referred to as the 'town green'. The main part of that land lay in the area between the Churchyard, Croft House, and Appleby Road (Fig. 11), (the name 'Appleby Road' has no current usage in the village). The map of the enclosure depicts this area with the Newbiggin Road and Well Road (now Piper Lane) in their present day positions and those routes were at least defined, if not laid out, at the time of the enclosure. Only the area of the north-eastern end of the excavated field was included on the map, which shows a curving boundary identified as ditch 128 in Trench 2. From opposite Croft House the town green is shown as being delimited by a straight boundary extending south-eastwards in approximate alignment with the medieval wall, and although it requires confirmation by excavation, it would appear that the two boundaries are identical. The curving boundary evidently represents an intake from the green prior to 1820, probably resulting from the collapse or destruction of wall 064. If this interpretation is correct it follows that the south-western edge of the green was originally defined for most, and probably all of its length, by a virtually straight boundary that extended from Piper Lane to Chapel Lane and possibly to the vicinity of the junction of the Newbiggin and Appleby Roads. If the medieval wall served to define the green, then it would appear to constitute one of the primary land divisions of the medieval village, and in this respect it is unfortunate that the excavation was unable to accurately determine its date of construction.

It follows that the cobble surface was located on the town green. During the excavation it was thought that, because of its width of *c.* 16.5m, the surface probably constituted a yard, of which the associated structure(s) were unlocated. The service trench, however, revealed that its width appeared to be maintained some 40m to the north-west. The location of the surface on common land considerably reduces the probability of it being associated with any structural remains and although village greens could accommodate buildings of communal utility, such as a smithy, this seems unlikely at Kirkby Thore. The village has been described as being of composite or polyfocal plan (Roberts 1987, 127-8, 177). In the present context, the most important aspect of its morphology is that in no area does there appear to have been an extensive concentration of dwellings on the available street or green frontage. In particular, the area of the excavated field adjacent to the green was apparently under cultivation during a period of a general increase in population which lasted until the first half of the 14th century. That the area was clearly not utilized for tofts indicates that there was no great pressure on land to warrant building on the town green. The cobble surface is therefore interpreted as a road, with its excessive width taken to possibly relate to some associated communal function. The obvious candidate for this would be a market, and although Kirkby Thore did not receive a market charter, it was not uncommon for villages to sustain informal local arrangements for the periodic transfer of goods (Postan 1975, 233). On this interpretation the cobble

FIG. 11. – The area of the main part of the town green in 1820.

surface could be seen as functioning as both a thoroughfare and a hard-standing for stalls and animals. An interesting corollary of this use is that the ditch, 123, at the foot of the boundary wall, may include a significant amount of associated rubbish material in its fill. The road is presumed to have followed the boundary of the green from Piper Lane to Chapel Lane and possibly to the junction of the Newbiggin and Appleby Roads; beyond those points its route is open to conjecture.

The wall and road evidently formed significant features of the medieval village and while the wall continued, in part, to function as a boundary until the 19th century, the road fell into disuse at an earlier date. The reason for this is unknown. The intake from the commons could only have occurred after the road had ceased to be of use and therefore represents an effect rather than a cause of its disuse. It is possible that the answer to this question may lie in the relationship of roads to the ownership and exchange of land beyond the area of the green. One event which may have some relevance is the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century.

During the 12th and 13th centuries the Cistercian Abbey of Holm Cultram received a number of grants of land in the township of Kirkby Thore (Grainger and Collingwood 1929, 157-190, 233). Although some amounted to areas of only a few acres, one of the earliest, in 1179, by Waltheof (grandson of Whelp), was of sufficient size, evidently intentionally, to enable the abbey to establish a grange at Hale (Grainger and Collingwood 1929, 157). Part of the land at Hale lay in the neighbouring township of Newbiggin. The extent and locations of the abbey's holdings cannot be determined, as all the grants describe the transferred land in terms of the contemporary names of the topography and fields which, for the most part, are now lost. In addition to Hale, the few identifiable features include, 'the king's highway' (the A66), 'the road to Soureby' (?Priest Lane) and 'Maydengathe' (the Maiden Way, (see p. 119)). The recurrence of references to these features and to the neighbouring settlement of 'Soureby' (Temple Sowerby) in particular, and also to 'Neubigging' (Newbiggin), would imply that the major part of the land holding lay to the north-west of the village, centred on Hale, and extended towards Temple Sowerby but not to the south-west of the A66. It is not certain for what length of time the monks were directly involved with this land as in 1423 the abbey received a payment of rent for the grange from the Crackenthorpe family (Hudleston 1964, 377). In 1543, following the dissolution, the same family purchased from the crown both the grange and the sequestrated monastic land (*Cal. L. & P. Hen. VIII,* xviii, 449.17), which amounted to 182 acres (73.7ha) in Kirkby Thore and Newbiggin (N. & B. Vol 1, 369). This change of ownership, which may have been followed by a re-sale and/or lease of parts of the acreage, could have caused some reappraisal of field boundaries and means of access, which in turn may have altered the routes to the green resulting in the disuse of the road. It must be emphasized that this explanation is purely speculative and is not supported by any direct evidence. Two plans of the village dated to *c.* 1500 are known to exist (Hudleston 1964, 380), but cannot presently be located.

Finds of medieval pottery have been reported from elsewhere in the village: from the south side of the A66 (Hudleston 1953), and from the trenches of the 1970 Sewerage Scheme in the field between the fort and Kirkby Thore Hall (Plowright 1970, App. E).

The Roman town (Fig. 12)

The existence of a town at Kirkby Thore has important implications for our understand-

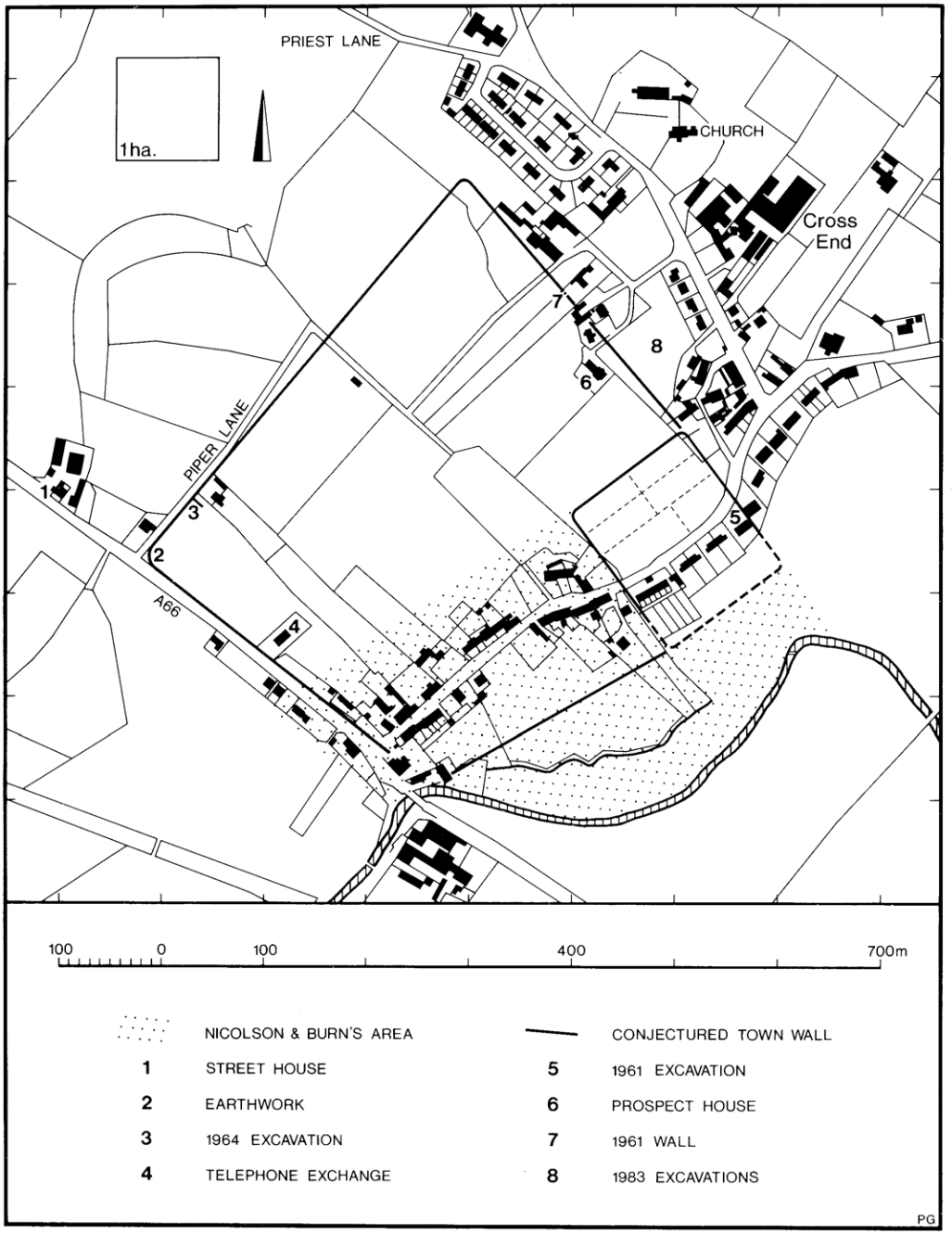

FIG. 12. – The main area of Roman occupation.

ing of the economic, social, political and military development of the north-west during the Roman period. In view of the failure of the excavation to locate any indication of the town's defences in an area where they were presumed to lie, it is appropriate to review the evidence for the town.

In common with a number of Roman military sites in the north-west, the visible remains of Roman activity at Kirkby Thore are virtually non-existent. The evolution of the village, depredations from stone robbing and the process of agriculture have all contributed to the levelling of the site. In addition, the very limited amount of excavation that has been undertaken places a far greater emphasis on antiquarian reports for a basic understanding of the nature and extent of the Roman activity. One of the fullest descriptions was written, not surprisingly, by Thomas Machell, from observations made in the late 17th century during the time he was Rector of Kirkby Thore:

> 'At Kirkbythore; . . . . all the vestigia I can find (after so long a time) lyes betwixt the Troutbeck on the S. East; the Roman way with a Piece beyond it called Waterman croft on the S. West; Keld, or Kelk-bottom (as tis commonly call'd) on the N. West; & the Church or Cross-end of Kirkbythore on the N. East. For within this Circuit (but Rarely elsewhere,) we have often observ'd foundations of Walls, both brick & stone (some of which were 4 wals on a breast standing close one to another;) Channels of stone & Leaden Pipes, for conveying of water; Urnes Altars & Tiles; with other fragments of Roman Antiquity; . . . Near the East Point of this tract of Ground, in the most ancient part therof (having an easy ascent on all sides) stands the Main Fort . . . . And it (yet) doth appear to have been a Large Square Replenish'd with Buildings, Containing 6 Acres of Ground, Whose Angles respect the Quatuor Cardines or iiii Points of Heaven.' (Machell MSS, VI, 209).

This account presents a problem with the identification of Waterman Croft and, more importantly, Keld or Kelk-bottom. The first edition of the Ordnance Survey 6-inch map (1863), shows the presently named Street House as 'Kelk House' and it seems probable that Machell was referring to farmland associated with that dwelling. There is a reference to 'Kelkes' and to 'the land called Keldes' in the grants of land made to Holm Cultram in the late 12th century (Grainger and Collingwood 1929, 184, 157), although with five centuries intervening there is no guarantee that the same location is being referred to.

Writing a century later, Nicolson and Burn provide the only other description of the extent of the site. They acknowledge their debt to Machell's unpublished manuscript:

> 'The main body of it [the fort] hath stood (as may be conjectured, he [Machell] says, from the ruins underground) in a place called the *Burwens*, on a rising ground, at the bank of the rivulet called the Troutbeck, and not far from the river Eden. The square inclosure, called the High Burwens, seems to have been the area of it, containing 8 score yards in diameter, now ploughed and cultivated; and the outer buildings, mantle, and gardens, to have run down along the said rivulet at least as far as the fulling mill, and possibly further, beyond the high street or Roman way; thence up the west side of the said street about 8 score yards, and thence up again in a straight line to the west angle of the said area. For in all these places the vestigia of it may be discovered, by conduits underground; subterraneous vaults; fair pavements of floors made with flags; tiles, and slates, with iron nails in them, by which they have been fastened: but principally, by the foundations of walls, both of brick and stone; as also coins, altars, and urns, with other fictilia, often found therabouts.' (N. & B. 1777, Vol 1, 379).

(Eight score yards = 146.3m).

The extent of the area of Roman activity is here stated in a far more accessible manner, although how closely the north-western limit corresponds with that of Machell's description is not made clear. The most significant difference is that the church or Cross End are evidently dismissed as the north-eastern limit.

In visiting Kirkby Thore in 1811, John Hodgson made the following observations which supplement the earlier accounts:

> 'The foundations of its [the fort's] vallum are very perceptible at the south east corner, and its whole area is circumscribed with strong lines . . . . The high road between the lower and upper part of the village runs a little within its southern wall, on the outside of which the ground is still uneven with foundations of buildings, as it also is on the west side.' (Hodgson 1813, 89).

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments included the main part of Nicolson and Burn's description in their assessment of Kirkby Thore, published in 1936. The Commission noted the site of the fort on Burwens Hill and described the escarpments and field boundaries which they took to indicate the approximate line of its south-eastern and north-eastern defences. In investigating over a wider area they also drew attention to a bank with a rounded corner, nearly 9ft (2.74m) in height, lying in the angle of the junction of Piper Lane with the A66. This feature they described as a rampart, with a slight depression in the earthwork regarded as a possible entrance. The Commission considered whether the two areas of earthworks were part of the same *enceinte* and concluded:

> '[it] must be regarded as doubtful, since on a reasonably symmetrical plan the area thus enclosed would be about 36 acres [14.6ha], which far exceeds the area of a roadside fort. It might be suggested that the site was originally that of a large 'labour camp' . . . . and that the permanent fort subsequently occupied only the more dominant part of the original enclosure. . . . the whole matter must be left open pending further discoveries.' (*RCHM Westmorland* 1936, 146).

There is here no incompatibility with Nicolson and Burn's account, as a temporary camp would produce no evidence of stone structures and very few artifacts. The most confusing part of the Commission's account is that their published plan fails to show the 36 acre area; instead, the shading illustrating the extent of the Roman activity appears to indicate two separate forts. More importantly, no attempt was made to illustrate the area of Roman activity quoted from Nicolson and Burn. (*RCHM Westmorland* 1936, 144-6).

In 1948 the CWAAS visited Kirkby Thore as part of its annual programme of historical perambulations and a description of the site was made by E. Birley, a transcript of which subsequently appeared in the *Transactions*. His account, which cites *RCHM Westmorland* as a reference, includes the following:

> '. . . the area which had produced evidence for Roman occupation was as much as 36 acres; the Roman site, then, was about half the size of Roman Carlisle and as large as *Corstopitum* [Corbridge], and . . . . like *Corstopitum*, in its later years at least *Bravoniacum* [Kirkby Thore] had developed into something like a town . . . between Street Cottages and Street House there was still to be seen a fine stretch of rampart, with rounded angle just short of the junction of Piper Lane with the main road, which seemed easiest to interpret as part of the defences of a roughly square fortified area, only one corner of which had been in military occupation, the remainder representing a small town which had grown out of the *vicus* attached to the fort.' (Birley 1949, 181).

It is here that two fundamental and unjustifiable interpretative leaps were made: the area producing remains and artifacts, as described by Nicolson and Burn, is expanded to fill the full 36 acre area postulated by the Royal Commission; and the possible labour camp is transformed into a small town.

This account might have remained in relative obscurity had it not been resurrected by Birley in a lecture concerning the nature of the frontier zone, given to the Royal Archaeological Institute in 1954, and subsequently published. Kirkby Thore was described as follows:

> 'But the fort is only one element in a very much larger complex, extending to something like thirty-six acres, and showing unambiguous signs of defence, particularly at the south-west *sic.* angle, close to the modern main road (itself here coinciding with the Roman line); there can be no reasonable doubt that in this case we have a small town, substantial after its fashion, which had developed under the shelter of the cavalry fort.' (Birley 1958, 54).

What is interesting here is that in 1949 aerial photographs had been taken for the first time of parch-marks which clearly revealed the precise location of the north-western half of the fort, showing the defences and gate, and the layout of the internal streets (Charlesworth 1964, Plate I).[5] Birley refers directly to that evidence immediately before the quoted passage, but he apparently discounts the fact that the photographs give no indication of a principal road, or of a street layout, extending beyond the north-western defences in a location where they should exist if the larger area were the site of a town.

By this stage the antiquarian reports had been consigned to the background and it has subsequently been within the shadow cast by this theorizing, rather than any illumination produced by it, that further archaeological investigations have been undertaken.

In 1961, housing development provided an opportunity for D. Charlesworth to excavate at two locations in the village. The main area investigated included part of the north-eastern defences of the fort, which were assumed to be coincident with the proposed defences of the larger occupied area. In deference to the *RCHM* account, Charlesworth sought to establish whether the earliest defences were those of a temporary camp rather than a permanent fort. She concluded that, despite similarities with other temporary camps, they were in fact those of a fort, her argument resting principally on the date range of the coarse pottery. It would appear, however, that the crucial date of construction of the rampart could not, in fact, be determined (Charlesworth 1964, 66-7). The second, much smaller, excavation was located *c.* 575ft (175m) to the north-west of the northern angle of the fort on the presumed alignment of the north-eastern defences of the larger occupied area. A single trench was cut at right-angles to the alignment, which revealed a linear extent, *c.* 6ft (1.83m) in width, of very large, naturally rounded stones. Although no dating evidence was recovered, Charlesworth concluded that the feature constituted the remains of the defensive wall of the civil settlement (Charlesworth 1964, 69 and Plate IV, a). This interpretation has two further anomalies: although the supposed defences at the road junction consisted of an earthwork, no reference was made to the remains of an earthen bank; and, from the published photograph, there appears to be no evidence that the wall was fronted, as might be expected, by a defensive ditch. The area of the proposed town shown in Fig. 12 takes into account the location of the fort as revealed by aerial photographs and excavation, and the position of the excavated wall footing. The resulting enclosure cannot be adequately described as 'reasonably

symmetrical' and it amounts to some 45 acres (18ha) in area. The results of the excavations were, nonetheless, taken to vindicate Birley's otherwise unsubstantiated notion of the nature of the site, and the Roman town at Kirkby Thore was subsequently acknowledged in some of the basic literature on Roman Britain (Salway, 1965/7, 41, 140; Frere, 1967, 206, 240; Breeze and Dobson, 1976, 206).

In the same year as Charlesworth's publication, however, evidence of a different nature came to light. Proposed building development enabled Charlesworth to excavate on the alignment of the earthwork at the road junction. This feature constituted the key element for both Birley and the Royal Commission and its resolution was therefore, of major importance. The site was located *c.* 250ft (76.2m) from the road junction, towards the end of the north-western facing section of the earthwork. A single trench, 6ft (1.83m) in width and 44ft (13.4m) in length, was cut from the hedgeline and at right angles to the lane. It was completely sterile of either features or artifacts. Charlesworth had to conclude that the presumed line of the town wall was not correct and that the earthwork at the road junction 'may prove after all to be a natural feature' (Charlesworth 1965). Birley was aware of the implications of this excavation. In an article published in 1967 he acknowledged that, in respect of being a walled town rather than a *vicus*, 'Kirkby Thore must for the present go into a suspense account' (Birley 1967, 11). The results of this excavation were sufficient to discount the Royal Commission's notion of a temporary camp and would have been sufficient to disprove Birley's theory were this not supported by the previous discovery of the wall. As a result, whilst the existence of the town was certainly brought into question, it was not wholly disproved.

An opportunity to investigate the line of the conjectured defences on the north-east side of the A66 was provided by the proposal to construct an Automatic Telephone Exchange. The site had its south-western edge on the projected alignment of the south-west facing section of the earthwork, and lay outside the area described by Nicolson and Burn as that 'where vestigia might be discovered'. Trial holes were dug by the Public Service Agency to examine the subsoil in 1971[6] and again in 1979.[7] In all of the total of five holes, 0.6-0.75m of topsoil and ploughsoil lay directly over a sandy clay subsoil, with no evidence of intervening archaeological stratigraphy. One of the holes appears to have revealed a pit or shallow channel, similar to some of the features excavated in 1983. In respect of the town, the evidence was inconclusive: the area sampled was very small and only demonstrated an absence of intensive occupation. None of the holes was positioned less than *c.* 7m from the A66 so that the actual area of the alignment of the proposed defences was not, in fact, tested.

The work of 1983 and 1985/6 lay within the alignment of the 1961 wall footing with the northern corner of the fort's defences and clearly demonstrated that the wall was not part of a continuous defensive work. This conclusion effectively discounts the one piece of evidence presented as supporting Birley's theory.

What, then, is to be made of the feature which Charlesworth considered to be the town wall? In construction it appears to have some similarity to the medieval wall, 064, in Trench 2, although it was far more substantial both in its overall dimensions and the size of the stones (Charlesworth 1964, Plate IV, a). Charlesworth's report makes no mention of whether the full width of the feature, or any part of it, was set into a foundation trench, which leaves open the question of whether all of the stones were *in situ*. The alignment of the medieval boundary, 064, has been interpreted as coinciding

with the field boundary of 1820, which would place Charlesworth's feature some 25m further to the south-west, (Fig. 11). In the light of these considerations, it is possible that it formed some structural element, possibly the rear boundary wall, of a medieval toft lying adjacent to the town green, although it must be emphasized that there is no direct evidence to support this contention.

Much of this examination has been concerned with the details of written descriptions and excavated evidence. One of the oddest aspects of Birley's theory concerns an overall consideration of the layout of the proposed town. Without getting involved in the discussion of the factors affecting urban growth in Roman Britain, it would at first sight appear that the Stainmore road would provide the focus of a town at Kirkby Thore. The angle in the earthwork at Piper Lane, however, aligns the south-west facing defences along the north-eastern edge of the road, thereby excluding it from the defensive circuit. If the defences had been positioned further to the south-west, which would be more in keeping with the area of Roman activity described by Machell and Nicolson and Burn, the road would still only be on the periphery of the proposed area of the town. At Kirkby Thore the Stainmore road forms a junction with the Maiden Way, a road extending northwards to the fort at Whitley Castle and thence to *Carvoran* on Hadrian's Wall. If the proposed route of this road is also brought into consideration, the siting of the town becomes even more peculiar. Margary states that the Maiden Way is defined near the village by the straight section of Piper Lane leading up to the A66 (Margary 1957, 125). If this is correct, then the principal road junction in the area was situated immediately outside the western corner of the town wall. This would surely represent an unusual form of town planning or growth. There is, in fact, no evidence that the Maiden Way is defined by Piper Lane, as it has been traced only to the vicinity of Hale Grange, about 1 mile from the fort (Bainbridge 1855, 50). It is more probable that the Maiden Way was aligned with the fort's north-east gate, followed the *via principalis* through to the south-west gate and extended to form the focus of the *vicus* before joining the main Stainmore road. Even if this hypothesis is correct, it does little to resolve the incompatibility between the position of the main road and the line of the proposed defences.

It has thus far been implicitly assumed that the antiquarian accounts provide a basic definition of the area of Roman activity. Both experience and consistency dictate that this assumption must be examined, particularly as Machell's account clearly diverges from that of Nicolson and Burn in respect of the north-eastern limit of the area. The difficulty with Machell's account is that the town green lies between the fort and the church or Cross End, and as the green would not have been under cultivation, it is not clear what grounds Machell had for including it in the area producing 'vestigia'. The field investigated in 1983 lies within Machell's area and it is arguable that the cultivated part would not have revealed anything of note to him. Investigations undertaken by Charlesworth in 1969 and 1971 in response to the construction of two of the houses bordering the north-eastern edge of the field failed to produce any archaeological features or artifacts (Plowright 1970, 53).[8] It is possible that Machell, in being aware of finds in the vicinity of the church or Cross End, included what is in all probability an outlying site, within the main area of the settlement. This explanation may also apply to his references to Waterman Croft and Keld or Kelk-bottom. Our understanding of the extent of the main area of the civilian settlement therefore has to rest, for the present, with the description given by Nicolson and Burn. Some general confirmation of the

status of part of that area, the ground sloping downwards from Main Street to the Troutbeck, has recently been provided by a geophysical survey (Blackburn 1987). Nicolson and Burn's area, however, may well be too limited by virtue of their describing the distribution of the most substantial remains. It is possible that less substantial structures lay on the edge of the settlement and over a much wider area, and it is most probable that *vicus* structures are to be found outside the north-east gate of the fort, possibly forming a ribbon development along the Maiden Way. In more recent years, scattered finds of Roman pottery and artifacts have been reported from an area including the field between the fort and Kirkby Thore Hall and the land to the south-east of the village between the Troutbeck and the A66 (Plowright 1970, 95); and also from the confluence of the Eden and Troutbeck,[9] where they probably signify a secondary deposition resulting from the Troutbeck's erosion of the *vicus*.

There is, therefore, nothing to suggest other than that the fort at Kirkby Thore was associated with a nucleated *vicus* of a form similar to other *vici* in the north-west. Whether part or all of the *vicus* was ever defended, is a question of a different order, and one in which no amount of speculation will provide an answer.

THE FINDS

The pottery

Quantification:	Roman coarseware:	221 sherds	2.627kg
	samian:	102 sherds	0.307kg
	Total:	323 sherds	2.934kg
	Medieval:	194 sherds	2.290kg

In the assemblage of Roman pottery, the coarseware, which included amphorae, mortaria and fine wares, amounted to 68.4% by sherds and 89.5% by weight of the total, with the samian amounting to 31.6% by sherds and 10.5% by weight.

Of the total pottery assemblage, Roman pottery constituted 62.5% by sherds and 56.2% by weight, and the medieval pottery 37.5% by sherds and 43.8% by weight. Roman sherds were more numerous than medieval by a ratio of 1.7:1. On average, individual medieval sherds were 23% heavier than individual Roman sherds.

The Roman coarseware (Fig. 13)

By Louise Hird.

The Roman pottery comprises only 2.627kg (about 5lb 13oz) made up of 221 sherds, including 22 rim fragments, so the conclusions that can be drawn from such a small quantity are relatively limited, and the unstratified nature of most of the material makes definite conclusions even less realistic. The fragments are for the most part fairly small and abraded.

Included in the microfiche is a fabric series and a breakdown of the material into fabric percentages, calculated both by weight and by sherd count.

What is clear is that the coarse pottery dates in the main to the 2nd century, beginning

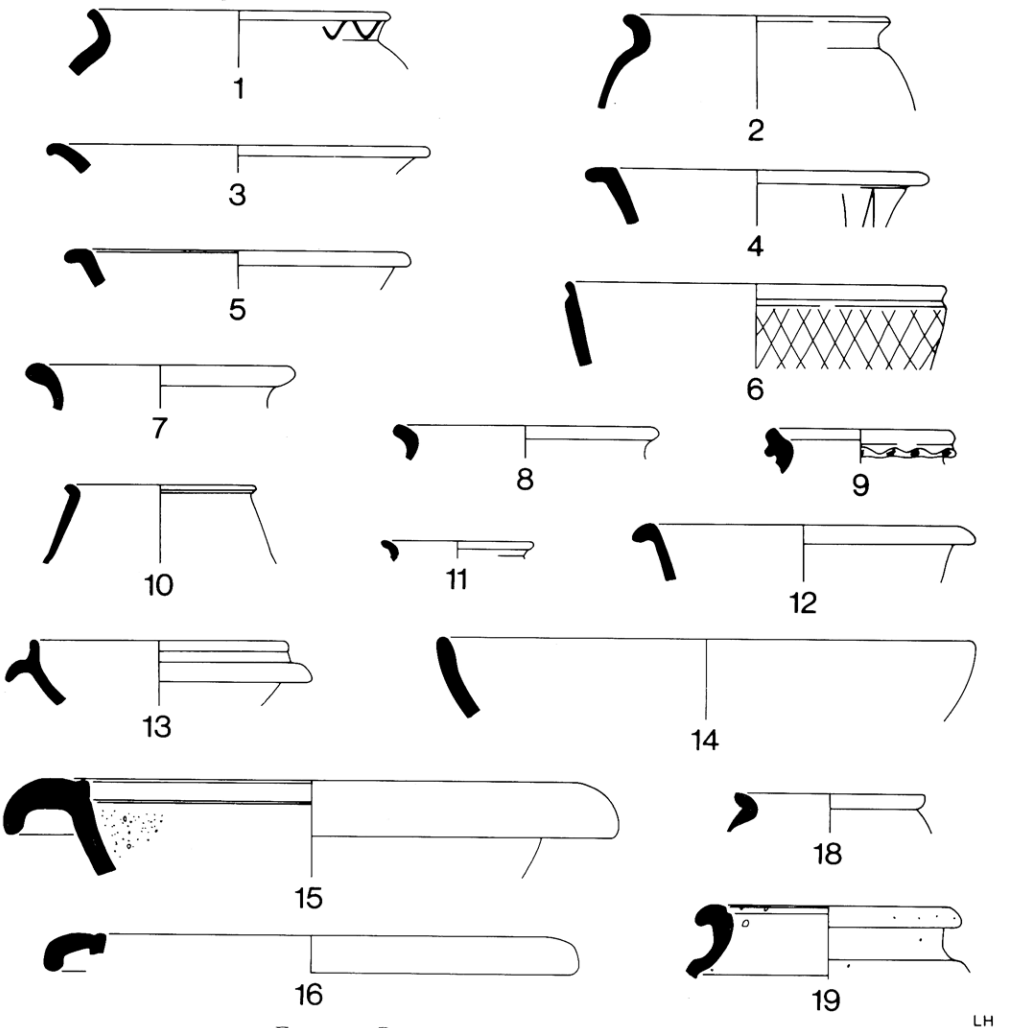

FIG. 13. – Roman coarseware, quarter full size.

about A.D. 125, and there is a small amount dating to the 4th or probably later 4th century. Types from the 3rd century are completely absent.

The sources of supply of the pottery provided no surprises. Oxidized ware was present in considerable quantity and was probably of local manufacture. Dorset BB1 is present along with Wilderspool mortaria. One mortarium spout, 17, is probably a Mancetter-Hartshill product. Very characteristic of the 4th century in the north of England is the calcite-gritted Huntcliff jar, 19, which is the late 4th century form.

Type-series catalogue of coarse pottery:

1. Cooking pot, BB1, (Gillam 1976, 1), early-mid 2nd century.
   007: Trench 2: Ploughsoil layer.
2. Cooking pot, BB1, 2nd century?

030: Trench 4: Intrusion (057): fill (medieval).
131: Trench 5: Intrusion/Pit (133): fill (Roman).

3. Cooking pot, BB1, (Gillam 1976, 12), early 4th century.
007: Trench 2: Ploughsoil layer.
4. Flat-rimmed dish, BB1, (Gillam 1976, 59), mid 2nd century.
094: Trench 5: Field drain (096): stone structure (post-med.).
5. Flat-rimmed dish, BB1, (Gillam 1976, 61), mid 2nd century.
007: Trench 2: Ploughsoil layer.
6. Dish with bead rim, BB1, (Gillam 1976, 68), early-mid 2nd century.
043: Trench 4: Channel (055): fill (Roman).
7. Jar, fabric 11, sandy, mid-grey fabric.
030: Trench 4: Intrusion (057): fill (medieval).
8. Jar, fabric 11, hard, mid-grey fabric with darker grey surface.
036: Trench 6: Ploughsoil layer.
9. Jar with frilled rim, fabric 11, light grey fabric with darker grey surface.
007: Trench 2: Ploughsoil layer.
10. Beaker, fabric 11, self-coloured mid-grey fabric.
030: Trench 4: Intrusion (057): fill (medieval)
11. Beaker, fabric 11, brownish-grey fabric with dark grey surface.
007: Trench 2: Ploughsoil layer.
12. Bowl, fabric 11, sandy, light grey fabric.
030: Trench 4: Intrusion (057): fill (medieval).
13. Flanged bowl, fabric 11, sandy mid-grey fabric with darker grey surface and brown core, 4th century?
037: Trench 4: Linear intrusion (054): fill (Roman).
14. Dish, fabric 11, soft, light grey fabric, late 2nd-4th century.
001: Trench 1: Topsoil.
15. Mortarium, fabric 31, Wilderspool. Has a stamp, poorly executed and fragmented in excavation, probably of DOCCIUS, (Hartley and Webster Fig. 8, Q), *c.* A.D. 110-160 (probably Antonine).
015: Trench 3: Ploughsoil layer.
16. Mortarium, fabric 31, Wilderspool, (Hartley and Webster Fig. 11, 90), *c.* A.D. 110-160.
038: Trench 4: Intrusion (048): fill (Roman).
17. (Not illustrated). Incomplete spout of mortarium, fabric 34, Mancetter-Hartshill? Later 2nd century?
028B: Trench 2: Cobble surface (medieval).
18. Beaker, fabric 50, sandy, pinkish-orange fabric.
052: Trench 5: Ploughsoil layer.
19. Jar, fabric 55, Huntcliff ware, (Gillam 1970, 163), late 4th century.
131: Trench 5: Intrusion/Pit (133): fill (Roman).

The samian ware (Fig. 14)
By FELICITY WILD.

The excavation as a whole produced 102 sherds of samian ware, mainly very small

and in a poor state of preservation. Where the forms could be determined, they were as follows:

Decorated:	29: 3, 37: 9, 29 or 37: 2, 30: 1?, 67: 1.
Plain:	27: 3, 33: 4, 18: 1, 18/31: 2, 31 (or variant): 5, 18/31 or 31: 4, 18/31R: 1, Curle 11 (or Ritt. 12): 1, 35 or 36: 1.

As a group, the dating spans the period from *c.* A.D. 80 to the second half of the 2nd century A.D. The three sherds of form 29 suggest initial occupation under Agricola. Of the latest material, 4 and 5, below, date from the period after *c.* A.D. 150. 6 is likely to be after *c.* A.D. 160.

Few of the pieces were in contexts where they were of use as dating evidence. The group from the fill, 095, of the fort ditch, 118, consisted of three sherds: a form 37 base, a sherd of a dish, probably form 31 or variant, and a thick sherd of indeterminate form, all likely to date from the second half of the 2nd century A.D. Layer 020 beneath the field bank in Trench 2 also produced a group dating to the second half of the 2nd century, including 4-6 below. Small fragments, probably all of Hadrianic or early Antonine date, came from the lower fill, 032, of the intrusion, 040, in Trench 3; the fill, 038, of the intrusion, 048, in Trench 4; and the fill, 043, of the channel, 055, in Trench 4. These are all likely to date from the first half of the 2nd century.

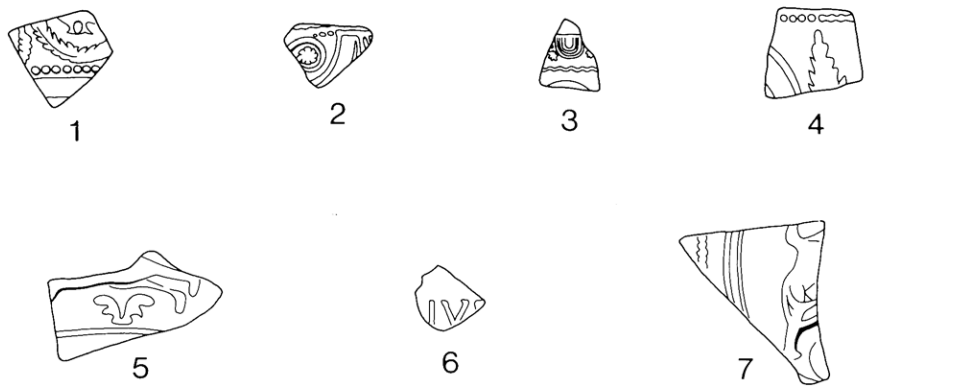

FIG. 14. – Samian, half full size.

Six decorated sherds are worth detailed comment:

1. Form 29, South Gaulish. Fragment of upper zone showing festoon containing bird, with vine-tendril pendant. Insufficient of the bird remains to be sure of the type, but such birds were common in festoon decoration. The festoon of leaves was used by potters such as Vitalis (Knorr 1919, Taf. 83,5) and Pass(i)enus (Knorr 1919, Taf. 62,61). Pass(i)enus also used a vine-tendril (Knorr 1952, Taf. 49D) and a similar bird (O. 2290). This piece cannot be attributed to a particular potter, but the date is clearly Neronian - early Flavian, *c.* A.D. 65-80.

015: Trench 3: Ploughsoil layer.

2. Form 29, South Gaulish. Small fragment of upper zone showing festoon decoration containing spirals, of a type common in the Neronian - early Flavian period.
051: Trench 7: Ploughsoil layer.
3. Form 37, Central Gaulish, probably in the fabric of Les Martres-de-Veyre, showing an ovolo, probably that of Stanfield's Medetus-Ranto group, Rogers' X.9 - X.10 (Rogers 1974, B38). *c.* A.D. 100-125.
052: Trench 5: Ploughsoil layer.
4. Form 37, Central Gaulish, showing scroll decoration with leaf (Rogers 1974, H101). The leaf appears in a similar scroll on a bowl stamped by Cinnamus (Stanfield and Simpson 1958, pl. 162, 61). *c.* A.D. 150-175.
020: Trench 2: Layer (Roman).
5. Form 37, Central Gaulish, showing freestyle hunting scene with animal, possibly the panther (O. 1546) and acanthus (Rogers 1974, K26). The acanthus was used by Cinnamus. A bowl in his style from Birrens (Wild 1975, fig. 55, 46) shows the acanthus and the ridge at the base of the decoration on a freestyle bowl. *c.* A.D. 150-175.
020: Trench 2: Layer (Roman).
6. Form 37, Central Gaulish. Small fragment which appears to show part of the potter's name stamp in the mould. The reading is uncertain, but is probably IV[STIM], the stamp of Iustus of Lezoux, who worked *c.* A.D. 160-190.
020: Trench 2: Layer (Roman).

The 1985 watching brief produced two sherds of samian, one of which is worth detailed comment:

7. Form 37, Central Gaulish, showing panel with large medallion containing the dancing figure (O. 348) used by Cinnamus and Paullus (Stanfield and Simpson 1958, pl. 165, 4). *c.* A.D. 150-175.

Abbreviation: O. = Oswald 1936-7.

Medieval pottery (Fig. 15)

by MICHAEL MCCARTHY.

A total of 194 sherds were submitted for examination. They were mostly very small and abraded and included very few profiles capable of illustration. All the pottery appears to belong to the 12th-16th centuries. As the material is often small and in poor condition it was decided to group the sherds into fabrics and not to attempt quantification except for recording sherd numbers per context. The microfiche contains this list. The text which follows is a simple description of the fabrics followed by a brief discussion.

Fabric 1. Hard, gritty ware with reddish brown surfaces and a grey core. There is a substantial grit component in the fabric which also has a hackly fracture. Fabric 27 at Carlisle. Forms present may be restricted to cooking pots with some internal glaze on the base. The fabric is part of the northern gritty ware tradition believed to date from the 12th-13th century. Similar sherds were recovered from pits predating the cemetery associated with the Dominican Friary at Blackfriars Street Carlisle.

Fabric 2. Hard, coarse sandy ware with orange-red surfaces and, occasionally, a grey core. Forms include a squared cooking pot rim and glazed jugs. The fabric resembles Fabric 1 above but it has a smaller sand element. It is probably 12th-13th century. It should be noted that at Carlisle the pits predating the cemetery contain sherds displaying some variations in the sand/clay mix as well as in colours. It is not yet clear whether these represent the products of different kiln sites or whether they are from a single production centre.

Fabric 3. Hard, coarse very sandy reduced ware. There are several externally glazed sherds, possible from jugs. The date of this type is uncertain but may be earlier rather than later medieval.

Fabric 4. Hard, slightly sandy, reduced fabric often with a very dark core and lighter margins. Fabric 1 at Carlisle. It is possible that the sand is a natural constituent of the clay and not a deliberate additive. Forms include a hand-made, probably coiled, bung-hole cistern and a single sherd from the base of a cup. Jugs are also probably represented. The presence of a bung-hole cistern and a cup place this fabric in the later medieval period with the cup as a Tudor product.

Fabric 5. Hard, fine slightly sandy fabric in a light orange colour. The two sherds present are from an externally glazed jug or jugs with some rouletted decoration. This is probably a regional import perhaps of 13th-14th century date.

Fabric 6. Hard, fairly coarse sandy fabric in off white-buff colours but with a reduced core on some examples. Forms include cooking pots with a short everted rim and another with a flanged rim. There is a jug rim and a thumbed base. On the very few sherds present glaze is rare and occurs as colourless splashes. The forms are consistent with a 13th-14th century date.

Fabric 7. Very hard, sandy fabric with pimply surface. The sand element is fairly light but there is sufficient to suggest that it was a deliberate additive. The only form recognized is a jug. The general appearance of the fabric suggests affinities with the very hard 14th-16th century wares such as the Midland Purple types or the Humber ware tradition of Yorkshire-Lincolnshire.

Fabric 8. Generally hard, sandy but with varying amounts of filler and degrees of oxidation-reduction. Forms include cooking pots, glazed jugs and a number of rouletted sherds possibly from the same jug. This category is a catch-all for miscellaneous sherds that do not fit readily into any of the above fabric groups. The dates are generally all medieval.

Discussion

There is insufficient good stratification and too few sherds to enable any firm conclusions to be drawn about the date of features investigated. For what it is worth the earlier fabrics (1-3) tend to be smaller and more heavily abraded than the later types (fabrics 4, 6, 7 and some in 8).

The production centres supplying Kirkby Thore with pottery in the medieval period are uncertain. Kilns are known or suspected in Cumbria at Waberthwaite on the south-west coast (Cherry and Cherry 1984, 267), St Bees[10] and Carlisle[11] where wasters and possible kiln debris attributed to the 14th century are reported from excavations at Castle Street and St Mary's Gate (Jope and Hodges 1955, 101). Others almost certainly existed especially in the Penrith-Brougham area. Jope and Hodges refer to a hint of pottery

wasters at Brougham Castle (Jope and Hodges 1955, 81). Fabric 4 is not dissimilar to the products of the Silverdale, north Lancashire, production centre but the type is commonly found over the north and on either side of the Pennines and so may derive from another source. It should also be noted that Kirkby Thore lies astride the traditional trans-Pennine route from north Yorkshire and Teesdale to Cumbria which increases the likelihood of regional imports, such as fabric 5, being present in a small rural community.

Although there has been very little work done on medieval pottery since Jope and Hodges published a small stratified sequence from Carlisle in 1955, recent excavations have produced large quantities which will go a long way towards defining regional styles. At Blackfriars Street, Carlisle, pits overlaid by the Dominican Friary cemetery contain a range of fabrics and forms consistent with a 12th-13th century date (McCarthy). Excavations at The Lanes, Carlisle produced a stratified sequence of sherds from a variety of buildings, pits, yards and wells dating from the 12th-13th century to the post-medieval period. Other sites in Carlisle have also produced useful groups. Excavations by the Cumbria & Lancashire Archaeological Unit at Cockermouth produced a stratified sequence which, when published will make a useful comparative assemblage from another urban centre.[12] Closer at hand there is a small collection from Clifton Hall and unpublished material from Kendal, Penrith and Brougham.

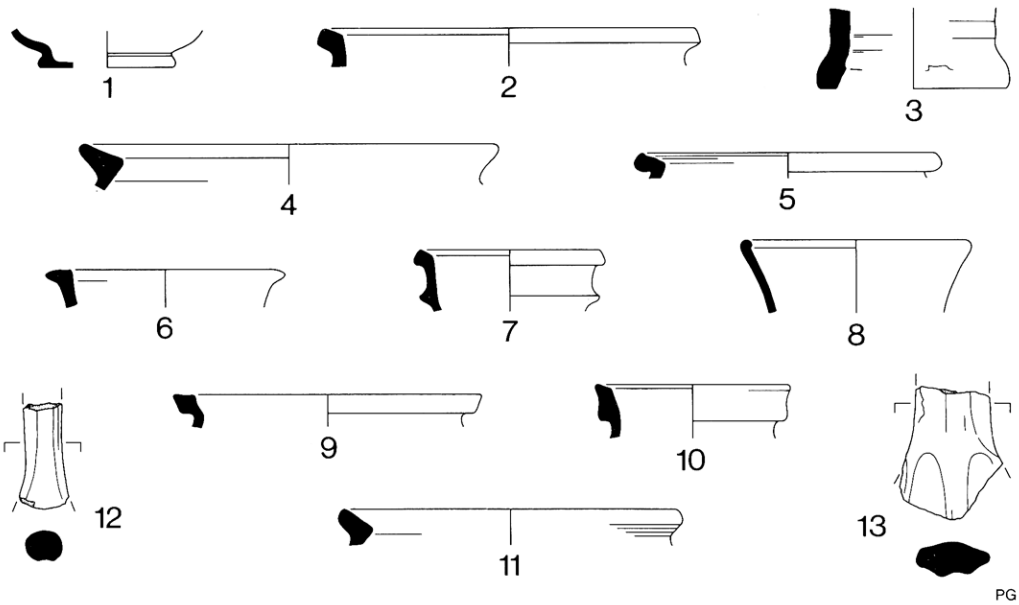

FIG. 15. – Medieval pottery, quarter full size.

The illustrated sherds:

1. Base of cup, fabric 4, yellow/green glaze on interior, lighter grey slip on exterior.
   001: Trench 1: Topsoil.
2. Cooking pot with squared rim, fabric 8.
   001: Trench 1: Topsoil.

3. Base of jug, fabric 4, yellow/green glaze on exterior.
   002: Trench 1: Ploughsoil layer.
4. Cooking pot, fabric 6, small splashes of colourless glaze.
   002: Trench 1: Ploughsoil layer.
5. Cooking pot, fabric 6.
   002: Trench 1: Ploughsoil layer.
6. Jug, fabric 2, olive green glaze on exterior.
   004: Trench 2: Topsoil.
7. Jug, fabric 7.
   004: Trench 2: Topsoil.
8. Jug, fabric 8.
   006: Trench 2: Ploughsoil layer: field bank (medieval).
9. Cooking pot with squared rim, fabric 2.
   007: Trench 2: Ploughsoil layer.
10. Jug with collared rim, fabric 6.
    007: Trench 2: Ploughsoil layer.
11. Cooking pot, fabric 6.
    007: Trench 2: Ploughsoil layer.
12. Rod handle, fabric 4, traces of yellow/green glaze.
    007: Trench 6: Hollow-way (140): fill (post-medieval).
13. Strap handle, fabric 8, yellow/green glaze on interior of vessel, 'run' of glaze on handle.
    077: Trench 6: Hollow-way (140): fill (post-medieval).

Other recorded finds (Fig. 16)

Flint (SF 6). Struck flake in translucent, light grey flint, with traces of cortex on one edge. The thinnest part of the flake has been removed with the resultant edge showing evidence of secondary working.
015: Trench 3: Ploughsoil layer.

FIG. 16. – Flint and glass bangle, full size.

Glass bangle (SF 8). Fragment of a bangle in naturally transparent light-blue, glass, of D-shaped section, with a cord moulding at the apex in transparent cobalt blue and opaque white glass. Kilbride-Jones Type 2 (Kilbride-Jones 1938). The glass was abraded and also appeared to have been impressed with plant debris, indicating that it was either poorly made or received the impressions after an accidental softening by fire. The internal diameter was *c.* 4.2cm, but with the possibility of a subsequent softening, this may be not have been its original size.

Although Kilbride-Jones defined the basic types of this class of object, many related questions remain unanswered. They have been found most commonly on native sites and Roman military sites in the counties of Lothian and Borders and on military sites associated with Hadrian's wall, although some types have a much wider overall distribution (Stevenson, 1976, 49). No manufacturing centre has yet been clearly identified, which leaves unresolved the very important question of whether they are native or Romano-British in origin. Whilst they have been classified as bangles, there is no evidence at all for their use. Their internal diameters range from 4.19 to 6.10cm (Stevenson, 1976, 50). The smaller examples could not have been worn as arm or ankle ornaments even by a child. Kilbride-Jones considered that they were worn as pendants (1938, 378-80), but Stevenson rejects that in favour of their being used to secure the hair (1976, 50). Few examples have been found in dated contexts, their association with Roman sites in the north has tied them, for the present, to a date range of late 1st - early 2nd century A.D. (Stevenson 1976).

044: Trench 1: Field drain (046): stone structure (post-medieval).

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The extract from Machell's manuscript has been published with the permission of the Dean and Chapter Library of Carlisle Cathedral. The extract from the map of the Inclosure Award has been published with the permission of the Cumbria Record Office (Kendal). The finds have been deposited with Tullie House Museum, Carlisle, with the kind permission of the respective landowners; with the exception of those from the new house which were retained by Mr J. Parkinson.

The site archive is to be deposited with the Cumbria Record Office (Carlisle). Microfiche copies will be lodged with the Cumbria and Lancashire Archaeological Unit at the University of Lancaster, and with the National Monument Record.

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