

Melandra Castle.

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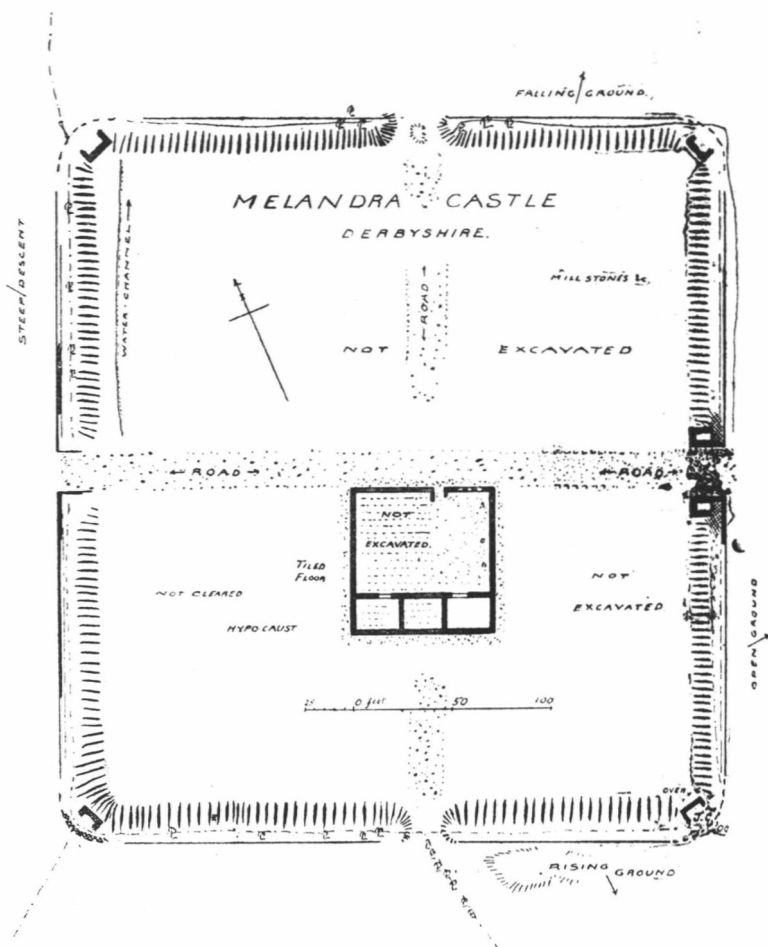


THE Roman station which has become known to us by the curious name of Melandra Castle, is to be found marked on the Ordnance Map No. II., 11, for the County of Derbyshire. It is on the confines of that county, at its extreme north-west, near to Dinting, and some thirteen miles from Manchester.

Archæological research in the surrounding districts, particularly with regard to the Roman works, has not yet been sufficiently advanced to enable the exact military or strategic local situation of this outpost to be realized. A mass of material exists for the history of the vicinity, though scattered through a hundred volumes, and requiring to be stripped of many superstitions; but the district is one that has naturally attracted chief attention to itself on account of other and earlier archæological and geological interests. The Roman remains have, therefore, been for the most part overlooked, or examined only in cursory fashion.

From information that may be accepted without serious questioning, the site selected for this fortress would seem to have been, as usual, a knot in the network of military roads that formed a chief feature in the defences employed by the Romans throughout the north of Britain. Its situation with reference to its surroundings is more remarkable. To the north-west rises War Hill, now occupied by Mottram Church, and on which traces of early earthworks are still to be seen; to the

north-east is the wooded top of Mouselow, a reputed stronghold of the British; while the east and south-east again are hemmed in by the fastnesses that lie away towards the Peak, and so much abound in traces of the earlier inhabitants. The Romans chose,



as the site for their fortress, a piece of land almost under shadow of these heights, where a gentle slope from the south breaks away steeply to the junction of two streams. The position was thus naturally defended on the one hand and some-

what overlooked on the other, yet this fact does not seem to have caused any change in the regular formation of the enclosure. With the single exception of a marl-pit, somewhat supplying the place of a fosse on the southern side, there appears to have been no special strength of defence in that direction, while the same nature of wall and rampart appears to have enclosed the whole.

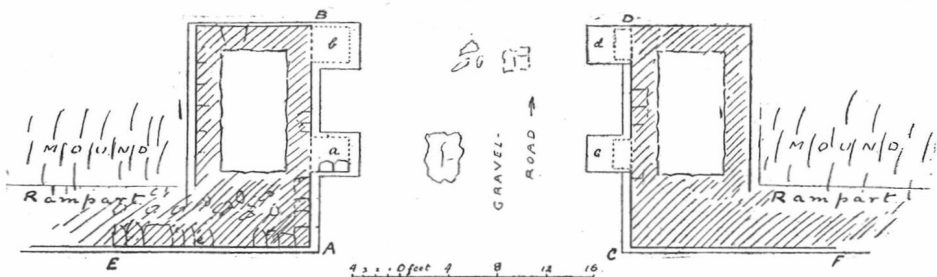
The nature of this chief defence is somewhat remarkable. It was doubtless faced around on its outer side with a stone wall, though the traces of this now remain near the chief gateways only. This was seemingly backed by a mound of rubble, earth, and marl. Several sections made through each side, well into the original surface, have one and all failed to reveal any sign of an inner retaining wall. A form of rampart unusual in Roman works is thus disclosed.* The outer shell of masonry has a thickness of little more than a foot, which the backing of rubble increases to four or five feet at its lowest course. With the base of the mound included the width is increased to twenty feet or more. The nature of the rampart-walk, if any such there were, and its association with the towers which surmounted its four corners, remains an unsolved problem. The top of the mound, which probably might be gained from any point of the interior, may have been used by the sentries, to whom the wall, rising somewhat higher on the outer side, would thus serve as a protection.

The outer wall having been previously stripped from around the three corners where the towers are otherwise well shown, and at the fourth (the western) the tower itself being not clearly defined, it is not now possible to examine the exact connection between these features of the masonry. The mound seems, in one or two instances (at least), to have been piled against the side walls of the towers, and in no case had a tower, whether in a corner or flanking a gate, a masoned floor at the ground level, nor any definite appearance of an entrance. This bears out the conjectures made elsewhere in the restoration of similar

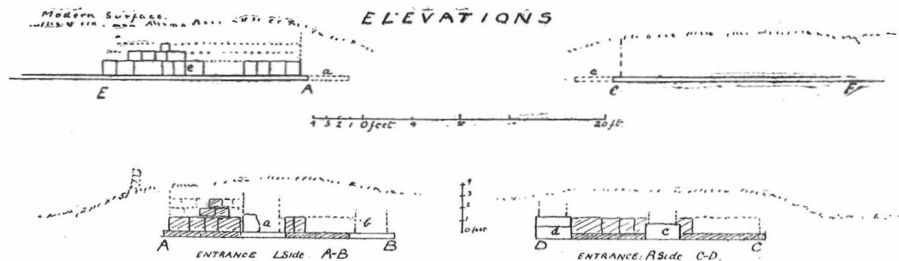
* The ramparts of the lately excavated fort at Gelligaer, near Cardiff, are somewhat similar. Earthen ramparts seem to have been commonest in the first century A.D. (F. Haverfield.)

EASTERN ENTRANCE

PLAN.



ELEVATIONS



DETAILS

VOUSSOIRS.

? DOOR
CIRCULAR SPAN:
2 ft. 6 in.



SMALL ARCH:
SPAN 25 ins.



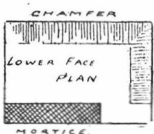
SPAN 27 ins.



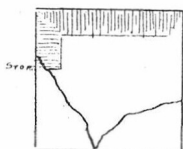
MAIN ARCH:
SPAN 8 feet



IMPOSTS

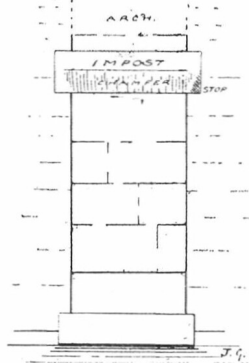
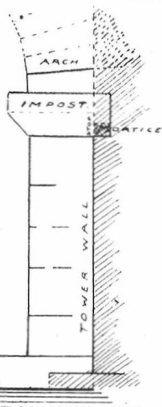


THE STOPS LINE WITH TOWER WALL



LEVEL OF R STREET

PILASTER RESTORED



0 1 2 3 4 5
SCALE FOR DETAILS.

towers, as some of those along the "Limes," where it is considered that these turrets were provided, in many cases, with a useful chamber only in the upper storey which might be entered directly from the sentry-walk upon the rampart.

The "camp" is similar in area and shape to other Roman forts of the smaller type. Being nearly square its entrances are found about the centre of its sides: each was flanked on either hand by a tower, and each seems to have been spanned by a double arch, with the exception of that behind the *prætorium*, that is to say, to the south of it, which was probably simpler in form. Of the latter, not much remains, nor indeed has it been sufficiently excavated as yet. Of the others, that to the east, that is the right hand when looking down the enclosure from the *prætorium*, may best be taken as the type; for while it is well preserved in almost every feature of its plan, the other two retain only such points as render it probable that they resembled it in every way.

The foundations disclosed in the excavations were those of the towers which guarded the entrance on either hand, and their junctions with the main wall and rampart, with the bases of the pilasters which supported the outer and inner arches, were all in position. The bed of the central "spina," which supported the weight of the double span in the centre, alone was difficult to locate. By reference to the plan of this entrance, it may seem that the gateway was recessed a little from the frontage of the camp-wall. *a, b, c, d*, are the bases of the pilasters abutting against the masonry of the towers, from which the arches sprang on either side. The elevations represent the stones as actually found on excavation. At *c* is an interesting little point, the superposition of two joins in the lowest and second courses of the wall, at a point exactly in line with the outer face of the tower wall on that side, thus showing, to some extent, how the design was carried out.

Of greater interest are the worked stones that for some years had been noticeable, lying about near this entrance. Several are *voussoirs* from the main arches of the gate and from a smaller door or window. Others, again, from their chamfer and

dimensions are identified as the actual impost from these pilasters. Two are complete, and fragments of others were found in the enclosing wall of this field, and near a farmhouse in the neighbourhood. Other large squared stones had undoubtedly been masoned into these pilasters. A mortice and a stop in the chamfer of one of the impost, readily give its alignment with the tower wall, and accordingly its projection, as represented in the detailed diagram. The spans of the *voussoirs*, too, correspond satisfactorily with the width of the entrance, and with what is otherwise theoretically required to invite and render possible a restoration of the whole gateway up to the spring of its arches. It seems probable that on the right hand was the main arch spanning a broad way for traffic, while on the left was a narrower gate for the entrance of those on foot. This type of gateway is very unusual in northern forts, and seems only to have been known at Hardknott Castle, but it is still to be seen in the Roman gate at Lincoln,* and Mr. Haverfield speaks of a similar construction in some of the smaller Roman forts of Northern Africa.

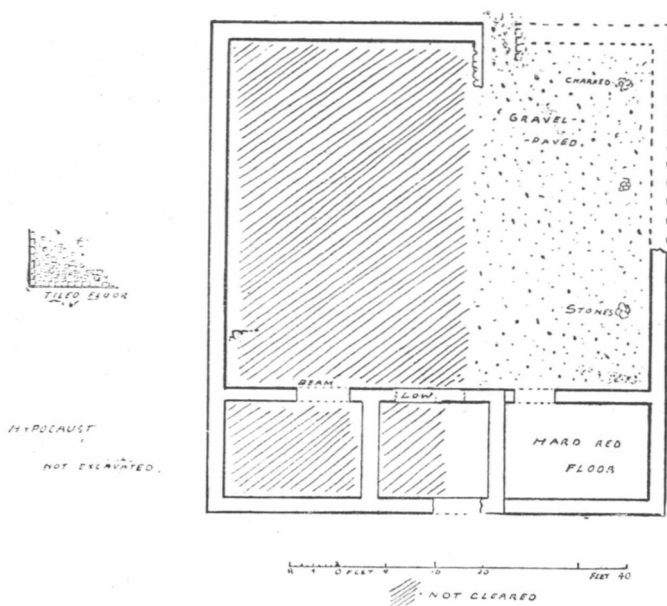
[In the restoration of the pilaster *c*, which was actually effected on the ground, by some oversight the line of the stop and mortice was built a little way from that of the tower wall, thus giving the whole pilaster a projection somewhat too great. Owing to the weight of stone, it was deemed inadvisable to place it aright until the restoration of that opposite to it is taken in hand.]

None of the other gates are so well preserved, and it is possible that this one to the east, leading to more level land, was the most used and best built. But both that opposite to it across the enclosure, and that to the north also, seem to have been similar in plan. The fourth may have been smaller and spanned by a single arch, or even enclosed by a wooden frame, of which there is some suggestion in various stones found in a cursory examination of it.

* The Lincoln gate, however, is not really analogous. It is interesting to compare the later work of the western gate at Richborough, excavated last year. *Archæ Cantæ*, XXIV. (J.G., 1901.)

The interior was crossed from gate to gate, as usual, by a "cobbled" street. That leading from north to south was necessarily interrupted by the prætorium which, as is usual in these works, is situated in the upper part of the enclosure, fronting the main street which passes from the East gate to the West. This building, with its chambers and courtyard, encloses an area nearly square. Its internal construction, while re-

THE PRÆTORIUM.



sembling that of other prætoria in general principle, inasmuch as it contained a series of rooms, the official headquarters, opening into a court, is not exactly like any that has yet been excavated.

Like other features of the fort, it most nearly resembles that previously mentioned at Hardknott, in Cumberland, and, indeed, upon complete excavation, it may prove to have been

exactly similar. Other features of these two forts are worthy of comparison. Each is of nearly the same area, with the same number of entrances, similarly situated. The chief quarters, too, occupy the most prominent position in each, and there is in both a conspicuous absence of stone buildings other than those of official necessity.

At Melandra, no definite trace of a granary has yet been discovered, but to the west of the *prætorium* one or two *pilæ* of a hypocaust have been found, though not in association; and near to them was a very curious "tiled floor," about a dozen feet square, edged with halved roofing tiles, the rims of which were turned upwards and in line. The enclosed space was covered miscellaneously with small tiles, broken and whole, many fragments of pottery, and the round segments of tiling that were wont to protect the joints of the roof-tiles. The utility of this curious floor is not yet made obvious.

There are several traces of ovens within this fort: the tiles forming the floor of one near the turret in the south corner show particularly well the part reserved for the baking and that allotted to the fire. Even the ashes, as raked out, remained in a pile close at hand.* Other interesting finds of smaller objects, grindstones, and the like, continue to be made. The area was drained by the Romans after their usual manner, and their water-courses are still most serviceable for carrying away the excess of rain and spring water that constantly arises.

Quantities of broken pottery of several kinds have been met with, some of them interestingly marked with hardly legible graffiti. One type of pot, of black ware with round spout and rim, and circular body of oval section, seems to be new to Roman Britain. But all such points may be better dealt with when the excavation is completed.

Some of the land to the west of the fort, forming a terrace on the brink of the slope which then descends to the river below,

* Similar hearths have been found at the Saalburg. They may be connected with the soldiers' tents, which have naturally left no definite traces. (F. Haverfield.)

seems to have been used by the Romans for some purpose, and is also worthy of examination.

The scheme for the excavation of this interesting, and in many features remarkable, Derbyshire camp, which Mr. R. Hamnett, of Glossop, initiated by the formation of the local Society for the purpose, has met with a conspicuous and gratifying success at its commencement, and it may be hoped that its further researches will be equally rewarded. The object of excavation should be to uncover only, and not to disturb, for every stone had its purpose, and it is by its position *in situ* alone that such purpose can now be ascertained. Excavations of ancient and valuable antiquities can only be justifiable when conducted strictly upon these lines, and the local Committee who have the Melandra work in hand are entrusted with a responsibility not to themselves only, but to the entire antiquarian and historical community.