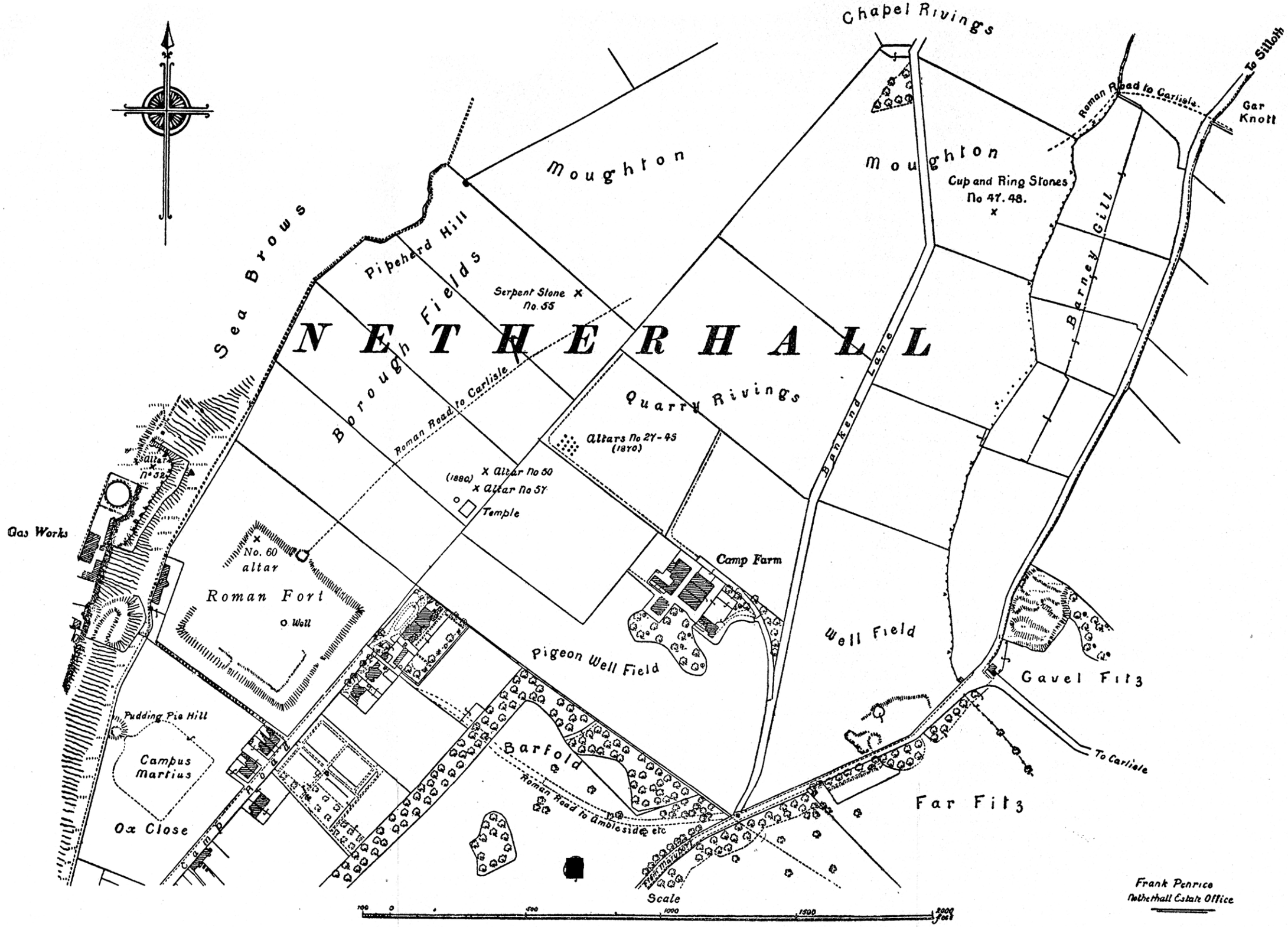

FIG. 1. MARYPORT: ROMAN SITE AND SURROUNDINGS.

Facing p. 85.

ART. X.—*The Roman Fort and Settlement at Maryport.* By R. G. COLLINGWOOD.

Read at the site, July 3rd, 1935.

WITH the exception of Hadrian's Wall, Maryport* (to call by customary modern name the ancient Ellenborough) is the most celebrated Roman site in our district. Camden, who came here in 1599, writes of it:

" Seated it was upon the height of a hill; and hath a goodly prospect farre into the Irish sea; But now, Corne growes where the towne stood, neverthelesse many expresse footings thereof are evidenty to be seene: The ancient vaults stand open, and many altars, stones with inscriptions, and Statues are heere gotten out of the ground. Which, I. *Sinhous* a very honest man, in whose grounds they are digged up, keepeth charily, and hath placed orderly about his house."

And Camden, like the scholar and gentleman that he was, remembered here as elsewhere in his great book to render public thanks for hospitality and help:

" I cannot chuse but with thankfull heart remember, that very good and worthy Gentleman, not onely in this regard that most kindly hee gave us right courteous and friendly entertainment, but also for that being himselfe well learned, he is a lover of ancient literature, and most diligently preserveth these inscriptions.†

* My object in printing this paper is not to give a complete account of Roman Maryport, but in the main to summarize, with comments of my own, the results of Robinson's excavations in 1880-1881, which are now only accessible in these *Trans.*, O.S., V, 237 *seqq.*, and have never been studied from the point of view of modern archaeology; also to give some account of the well-known " altar-hoard " found in 1870 and to reconsider its historical implications. The inscriptions have been well and lately published by the late J. B. Bailey in these *Trans.*, N.S., XV; I reprint here the general plan of the site and surroundings given there facing p. 135.

† Camden, *Britannia*, tr. Philemon Holland, p. 769. It is in the 1600 edition of the *Britannia* (p. 694) that the date of this visit is given as 1599. Haverfield in these *Trans.*, N.S., xi, p. 364, shows on the strength of a letter from Reginald Bainbrigg that later writers including the *D.N.B.* are wrong in altering the date to 1600.

A hundred years later we have Horsley's description of the site, in which he says that noble remains of antiquity appear here in great plenty, and describes the double rampart or as we should say the double ditch, and what he calls a round exploratory mount, which I suppose to be the now vanished Pudding Pie Hill, the *tribunal* overlooking the parade-ground.* Another hundred years, and we learn from a record at the end of the 18th century that "Colonel Senhouse keeps a man daily at work in searching and clearing the walls within the fort."† The age of excavation had begun, and the Senhouses were among the first to practise the new art of digging; but in those early days, as you see from the words I have quoted, digging meant "searching," that is, searching for inscriptions, coins, and other articles of interest, and no one troubled to plan or describe the structures revealed in the course of the search. We are told that an elegant Roman bath was found inside the fort, the cold-water bath being 16 feet long, which in fact is a good average size; we are told that the north gate was cleared and found to consist of fine masonry with a plinth; but otherwise we know nothing about the results of these late 18th century excavations. Since then, so far as I know, little or no digging has been done inside the fort; though Mr. Thomas Carey (who has lately attained the age of a hundred years) has told me how when he was young men used to go over the site with a pointed iron rod, and sound for stones and dig them up for use in building. The upshot is that about the fort itself we know very little, and probably it is so far destroyed that we shall never know much. We can still see its size and shape; it is nearly square, about 480 feet each way, perhaps a little longer from E. to W.; its area, therefore, is about $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres;

* Horsley, *Britannia Romana*, p. 113.

† *Archaeologia*, x, p. 140. The north gate was dug, according to this article, in 1787; the internal bath-house in 1788.

it has a double ditch and a stone or rather stone-faced rampart, and four gates whose positions are still visible, showing that the front of the fort, as at Beckfoot, faced the sea. Inside, there must have been the usual buildings; a well in the courtyard of the *principia* still exists, and Camden's vaults may be the strong-room of which our best example is at Chesters; as at Chesters, again, there was a fine suite of internal baths, perhaps the private baths of the commanding officer.

The remains lying outside the fort, having been more lately explored, when people were beginning to record their discoveries, are much better known to us than those inside it. To the south, a hundred yards away, was a levelled plot of ground a hundred yards square and overlooked from the centre of one side by a partly artificial mound. The analogy with Hardknot is very close, and it is clear that in both cases we have, or rather had, before houses were built over the Maryport site, a parade ground with the *tribunal* from which troops could be addressed and their drill inspected. The *tribunal*, which has at different times been known locally as the King's Burying Place and, in homelier terms, Pudding Pie Hill, appears to have been originally a natural hillock of boulder-clay, but added to with turf and gravel so as to form a mound 35-40 yards long by 12 wide.* It lay west of the parade-ground, which was the right place for addressing the troops, in view of the prevailing west winds and the exposed position of the whole site. A road, of course, connected the parade-ground with the fort.

Three other roads left the fort. One, from the north gate, has been traced by Mr. Bailey as far as Crosscanonby vicarage; thereafter it struck the sea-shore and continued past Beckfoot to the end of the Wall. Another, from the east gate, went straight down the hill to the Ellen, and so to the fort at Papcastle. The third also left the east

* These *Trans.*, N.S., xxiii, 148.

gate but ran southwards to the mouth of the river, crossing it on a wooden bridge of which Mr. Bailey has identified certain remains, and thence continuing along the coast to Moresby.*

Outside a Roman fort there generally grew up a village or settlement, the so-called *vicus*, housing the wives and families of the garrison, retired soldiers, tradesmen, and so forth; this *vicus* generally contained a number of temples and as a rule the bath-house of the fort. Also, there would always be a considerable cemetery somewhere along one of the roads leading away from the site. Recent study, especially that conducted by Mr. Eric Birley at Housesteads, has suggested that such settlements did not reach their greatest development until the third century.

If one asks where the cemetery of Maryport would most naturally develop, the answer is plain: beside the road leading northwards along the crest of the hog-backed hill on whose southern end the fort and parade-ground lie. And the same site is obviously the best one for the civil settlement. One might therefore guess that the land for half a mile northwards from the fort would, if excavated, show Roman remains of two distinct periods: first, the remains of a cemetery; secondly, overlying these, remains of a *vicus*.

This, I think, is what actually happened; nothing else will explain the facts brought to light by the only excavations that have ever been carried out on this site. They were undertaken by Mr. Joseph Robinson in 1880, and extended all over the four fields lying north of the fort.† Robinson traced the road, 21 feet wide and solidly constructed; beside it, he found numerous buildings which we can now recognize from his description as what I call strip-houses,‡ that is, long narrow buildings lying endwise

* *Ibid.*, iv, 250; xxiii, 147.
† *Ibid.*, o.s., v, 237 *seqq*.
‡ *Archaeology of Roman Britain*, pp. 107-110.

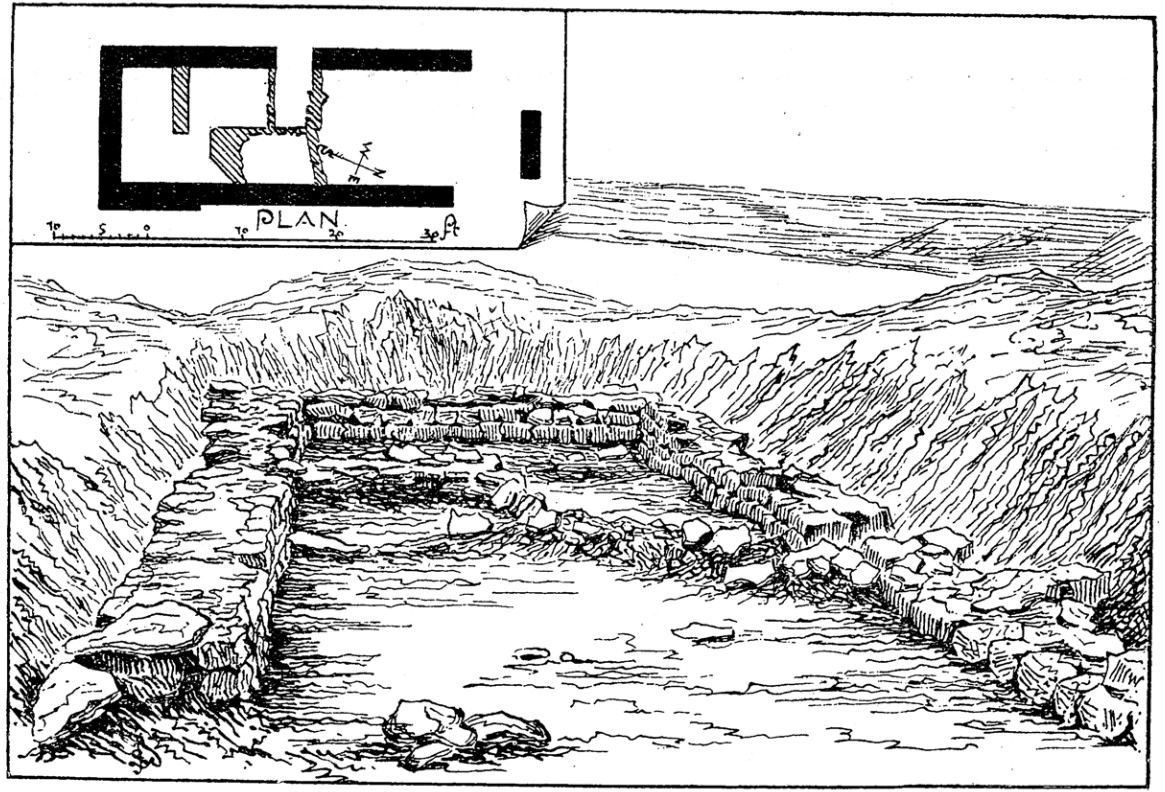

FIG. 2. STRIP HOUSE IN THE *VICUS*, MARYPORT, AS EXCAVATED 1880
(reproduced from *Trans.*, O.S. V, facing p. 252).

to the road, averaging say 40-50 feet long by 20 feet wide. These strip-houses were the normal houses of the poorer class in Roman towns, large or small, throughout the north-western provinces, and they are exactly what we should expect to find in a *vicus* like this. Those which were dug here in 1880 had stone walls, slate roofs and glass windows. Often houses like this had an open front on the street, serving as a shop; behind that, workshops for industrial purposes; and at the back, living-rooms for the family. The Maryport houses were perhaps less elaborate, but they yielded considerable traces of industry, notably iron-slag and much coal, for the Romans worked coal, wherever they could find it, all over England and the south of Scotland, and used it not only for heating but for burning in their bloomeries and smithies.

One point which Robinson specially noted was that the walls of these houses sometimes sagged downwards in curves, as walls do when they are built over pits or ditches that have been loosely filled up. This shows that the ground had been disturbed before the houses had been built; and it it clear from many passages in his report that in many cases at least this disturbance was due to burials, which were cremation-burials, that is, dated from the earlier part of the Roman age. This gives us the clue to the relation between the houses and the burials which he found so freely scattered over the same stretch of ground; it is the cemetery of the earlier Roman period, built over in the later period by this flourishing commercial and industrial town.

At one place, 200 yards N.E. of the north gate, he found two curious buildings of a different kind. I reproduce a tracing of his plan. One of them was rectangular, 46 feet long by 25 broad, with a projection 13 feet 6 inches wide by 6 deep at its SW. end; at its other end a strip was cut off by a cross-wall. The walls

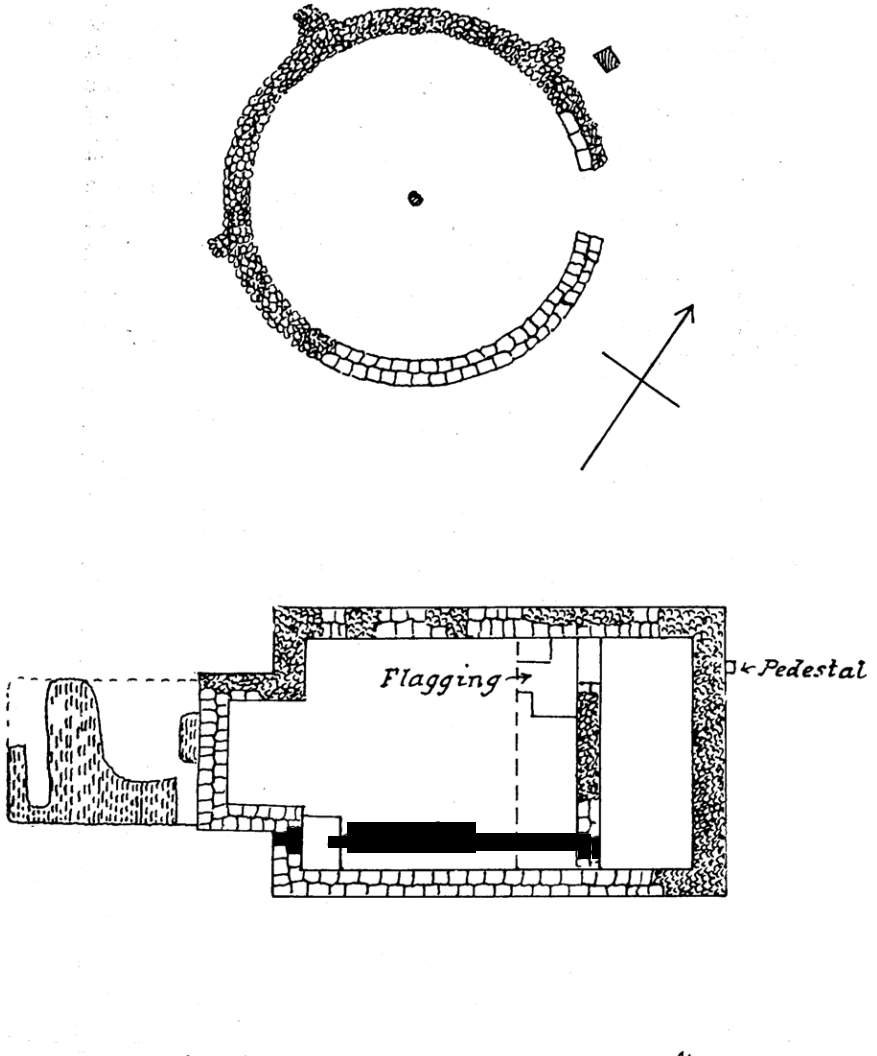

FIG. 3. TOMBS NORTH-EAST OF THE FORT, MARYPORT
(after John B. Harvey, *Trans.*, O.S. V, 256).

had been robbed down to their footings of freestone flags; in parts even this had been removed and only the clay-and-cobble foundations left. The interior had been paved with flagstones. A curious feature was found outside the south-west end: this was a mass of stones on edge, at first taken for a pavement, which Robinson later identified, no doubt correctly, as the fallen end-wall of the recess. He describes this as 18 feet long (his plan would make it 16) which indicates the height of the building; and its width of 12 feet, shown on the plan, indicates quite clearly the offset of the footing-course at its base.

Although some of the flags inside this building were found tilted to a considerable angle (which might have been caused, as at Housesteads milecastle, by the collapse of walls upon them) it does not appear that the foundations were in any way disturbed. That being so, the collapse of this west wall must have been due, not to subsidence, but to violence. This falls into line with the deliberate destruction of many Roman buildings in the north of England, from Hadrian's Wall to the legionary fortress of York, which we now ascribe to the invasion of the Maeatae in 196; and I think we may presume that the same invasion produced these and (as we shall see) many other results at Maryport.

What was this building? Robinson thought it a temple; but it does not correspond with any known type. Nor is it any part of a bath-house. I am inclined to think it a tomb of the mausoleum type; a portico on the east, then a central chamber, and then a recess for the actual burial on the west. A somewhat similar building, though on a smaller scale, was discovered many years ago at Keston in Kent: it measured 12 by 11 feet and had a projection 4 by 3 feet on one face, in which the burial was discovered.‡

‡ *Archæologia*, xxxvi, 120 *seqq.*; *Vict. Co. Hist.* Kent, Romano-British section, pp. 119-121.

The parallel with Keston goes a stage further. Twenty feet north of this structure Robinson found a circular building 34 feet in diameter, constructed in the same way, and provided with buttresses. No paving was found inside it; but in the middle was a mass of stones, containing a cist and a coin of Antoninus Pius. It therefore cannot be compared with the circular *sudatorium* of the Hardknot bath-house; it is a circular tomb, like that which was found at Keston close to the mausoleum-tomb mentioned above. Tombs of this kind, though not very common in Britain, are common enough for the type to be well established; the best-known example is at West Mersea in Essex. The coin of Pius is especially valuable; it dates this tomb, and therefore probably its neighbour, to the middle of the second century, and thus not only provides a date for this very magnificent development of the Maryport cemetery, but also gives further plausibility to the conjecture that the ruin of the mausoleum-tomb was done in the invasion at the end of the same century. The remains of a funeral-pyre were found outside the circular tomb, and many burials close at hand.

Another large building, too much ruined to be intelligible, stood west of the fort on the edge of the cliff. At the foot of the cliff, on the sea-shore close to the gas-works, Robinson found a Roman quarry, covered with a thick layer of blackened earth containing much charcoal, pottery and other oddments, including quantities of slate, roofing and flooring tiles, and a good deal of building-stone. This layer was 15 feet deep in one place, and extended 40 yards from the face of the cliff towards the sea; it was traced for a distance of 115 yards along the shore. Robinson especially noticed the vast quantity of charcoal and the evenness of its distribution throughout the deposit. He formed the opinion that this deposit had been formed by the outfall of the fort sewer, but that is impossible in view of its contents; and I would rather

suppose it a rubbish-tip, where the Romans had shot the débris of the destroyed fort in order to clear the site for reconstruction.

The whole of this *vicus* area, extending over some 500 by 300 yards, Mr. J. B. Bailey conceived to have been surrounded by a defensive rampart.* My own subsequent study of the ground, with some excavation carried out jointly by Mr. Bailey and myself, convinced me that there was no sufficient reason to believe in the existence of any such defences.

Finally, in this survey of remains outside the fort, I must mention Mr. Bailey's discovery of a paved area south of the river, about 125 yards square, possibly enclosed by walls, which he regarded as a Roman wharf.† In view of the absence of any finds of Roman date or work of characteristically Roman type, I am obliged to regard this as still awaiting confirmation.

Apart from structural remains, one very remarkable discovery is still to be mentioned. In 1870, no less than 17 altars were brought to light by deep ploughing in a corner of a field 400 yards N.E. of the centre of the fort. Excavation proved that 57 pits had been dug here in a plot of ground measuring about 70 yards each way; and while 40 of these pits were found to be empty, 10 had whole altars in them, numbering from one to three in each pit, and 7 others contained broken fragments of altars. The altars had obviously been concealed to protect them from wanton damage; they had been laid mostly face downwards, and when two or more were placed in one pit they had been separated by a layer of earth. No doubt many more than the 17 found on that occasion had originally been deposited there, but the rest had been accidentally found before 1870.

One naturally wishes to know when this great burying

* These *Trans.*, N.S., xxiii, plan on p. 153.
† *Ibid.*, xxiii, p. 146; xxvi, p. 415.

of altars took place. At the time of the discovery, Dr. Bruce suggested that it had happened on the occasion of the disaster that befel the British frontier in the reign of Commodus. I think he was, as a matter of fact, very nearly right; but in order to justify that statement I must go over the evidence as briefly as I can.

In the first place, every one of the buried altars, to judge by style and lettering, belongs to the second century. In the second place, all of them except one, which has suffered damage, are extremely fresh and unweathered, showing that when they were buried none of them had long been exposed to the weather. In the third place, they are all dedicated by three regiments, namely the First Cohort of Spaniards, the First Cohort of Dalmatians and the First Cohort of Baetasians; and it is possible to say something about the connexion of each regiment with Maryport.

The First Cohort of Spaniards must have lain in garrison at Maryport for some time; six different officers are known to have commanded it during its stay there. Of these, one was a man who rose to distinction afterwards. His name was Maenius Agrippa, and after commanding the Spanish Cohort at Maryport he rose to be successively prefect of the British Fleet and procurator of the province of Britain. He was a friend of Hadrian's, and consequently his command at Maryport must have fallen either in the earlier part of Hadrian's reign or conceivably, if Maryport was founded by then, in the reign of Trajan. All the inscriptions erected at Maryport by the Spaniards look as if they had been cut in the first half of the second century.

During the Antonine occupation of Scotland a tombstone of the First Cohort of Spaniards was erected at Ardoch, and therefore we may conjecture that this regiment left Maryport to take part in the Scottish expedition under Lollius Urbicus. Fortunately, we know

what regiment succeeded it. This was the First Cohort of Dalmatians; which has left 5 inscriptions at Maryport, two of them explicitly dated to the reign of Antoninus Pius.

The First Cohort of Baetasians has left memorials of itself both at Maryport and at Bar Hill in Scotland. Now, Bar Hill has yielded inscriptions not only of this Baetasian cohort but also of a cohort of Hamian archers from Syria, which in the time of Hadrian and again in the time of Marcus Aurelius was in garrison at Carvoran. Sir George Macdonald has argued that where records of two different regiments are found in one of the forts on the Scottish Wall, this means that one of them was in garrison there before the disaster of 155 or thereabouts, the other after that event. On that hypothesis, Bar Hill must have been held by the Baetasians during the latter part of its history, when the Hamians were back in Cumberland; that is, from about 156 onwards; and they must have been withdrawn from the Antonine Wall either after the second disaster, about 180, or when that Wall was finally evacuated, an event which Sir George Macdonald now places about 184. Thus we get a date of about 180-184 for the beginning of the Baetasian period at Maryport.

Their altars confirm this; for they look as if they belonged to just this period, the last quarter of the second century. It is true that the German scholar A. von Domaszewski regarded the cult of Mars, to whom two of them are dedicated, as first developing its military importance about the middle of the third century,* and I imagine that according to his view these altars should belong to that time; but no one who looks at them will believe that they do; their style is obviously much earlier than the middle of that century, and in my opinion even earlier than its beginning. There is a fairly definite Severan

* *Religion des röm. Heeres*, p. 34.

epigraphic style in Britain, and the Baetasian altars at Maryport, though they are coming very close to it, hardly belong to it.

If, then, the Baetasians were at Maryport late in the second century, the altars must have been buried after that; but not much after, for their lettering is still as sharp as on the day it was finished. In 196 the governor of Britain, Clodius Albinus, crossed the Channel in order to fight for the imperial crown. He took with him all the available troops; and while he was away the Maeatae broke in and destroyed all the Roman fortifications in the north of England. Even if no general orders were given to that effect, many commanding officers must have known, when the withdrawal was ordered, that this would be the result, and it is not surprising that some of them should have found time to bury their altars in order to save them from desecration. We do not know whether this was widely done or not; in many cases the same regiment, going back to its old quarters, would dig up the altars and re-erect them; but if the regiment never came back, being replaced by another, and if the civil population in the village outside the fort had either been exterminated by barbarians or was unwilling to reveal the hiding-place used by the former garrison, the altars might never be recovered. Something of this sort must have happened at Maryport. Like other frontier forts, it was reoccupied by the victorious armies of Septimius Severus,* and there is no subsequent occasion on which these altars could have been buried until the troubles at the end of the third century. But the composition and condition of the hoard, containing as it does no altars of third-century style and none that have appreciably suffered from weathering, shows that

* Epigraphic evidence of Severan rebuilding exists, I think, in the slab at Netherhall (no. 1 in Bailey's catalogue = CIL. vii, 395) with a pair of victories and the inscription *Victoriae Aug(ustorum) d(ominorum) n(ostrorum)*, where style and titles alike suggest the emperors Severus and Caracalla.

it cannot have been hidden so late as that. We are forced to the conclusion that these altars were buried in 196, when Albinus ordered the withdrawal of the garrison. We have already seen evidence that the precaution was a wise one: for it was probably now that the tombs north-east of the fort were violently thrown down, and the general destruction of the fort itself whose débris was found by Robinson on the shore almost certainly happened at the same time.

We do not know what garrison Severus placed at Maryport when he rebuilt it. Evidently it was not the Baetasians; for in that case they would have recovered their altars. Conceivably it may have been the Spaniards; that would have been consistent with his general policy of reconstituting Hadrian's frontier-system in pretty much its original form; and if so the Spaniards may have remained here until the list of garrisons was compiled which is preserved in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, in which case the Celtic name of the place is Uxellodunum, the lofty fortress, for that is the name of the place which is said in the *Notitia* to be garrisoned by that cohort. But this is only a possibility; in point of fact, we know nothing about the garrison of Maryport after the end of the second century and have no idea what its ancient name really was.

What conclusions can we reach as to the history of this extensive and remarkable Roman settlement? In the first place, the pottery and coins now or formerly preserved at Netherhall prove an occupation going back to Hadrian and possibly earlier; of the coins and datable potsherds a considerable mass in Trajanic, and I think is easiest to explain on the hypothesis that Maryport was a Trajanic foundation;* for there is no real evidence of a first-

* There are 14 coins from Nero to Nerva, 18 of Trajan, 8 of Hadrian and 9 of Pius. Of the pottery at Netherhall, so far as my examination of it goes a fair amount of the decorated Samian is Trajanic; I hope it will be examined by someone with a more expert knowledge than my own.

century fort here, though at the same time it would not be at all surprising to learn that Agricola had occupied this hill-top in the course of his campaigns. With Hadrian begins a period of intensive occupation when the site became an integral part of the coast-defences at the west end of the Wall. There was almost certainly a complete destruction at the end of the second century, and in the third century a new phase began when the settlement north of the fort developed into an industrial town, perhaps in part depending on coastwise traffic reaching the mouth of the river. This phase lasted, it would seem, well into the fourth century; and since the coins go down to the very end of that century it is clear that Maryport outlasted the evacuation of the Wall and may not improbably have lingered on into the dark ages that followed the departure of the Romans.