

ART. IV.—*Some Roman roads in Cumberland.* By R. L. BELLHOUSE, B.Sc.

*Read at Carlisle, March 24th, 1956.*

### I. CARLISLE TO PAPCASTLE.

THE Roman road which leaves Carlisle in a south-westerly direction, and runs past Old Carlisle to Papcastle, must have been an important line of communication; besides providing a direct link between three large forts, it gave off branches northwards and westwards towards Drumburgh and Maryport, and southwards probably to Brougham and almost certainly via Caermote to a road-junction near Keswick. Beyond Papcastle, there is some evidence on the ground, and in the writings of early antiquaries, for a continuation of the main route towards Egremont, with a westward branch to the coastal fort at Moresby.

Although the existence of the Carlisle-Papcastle road is not in doubt, and its course is marked as certain on maps of Roman Britain, it seems desirable to place on record a large number of observations, collected together over a good many years (during journeys between Carlisle and Cockermouth), which satisfactorily establish its exact course in many places, and confirm its Roman origin. In the process, this study provided me with valuable experience in the field, marking the beginning of my active interest in field archæology.

#### (a) *The course of the road.*<sup>1</sup>

The exact point where the road begins cannot be identified. It is safe to infer that it was already in use

<sup>1</sup> In describing the course of the road I have used National Grid references to six digits, taken from the 1 in. Ordnance Survey maps (Popular Edition).

before the end of the first century, and that at that time there was a Roman fort at Carlisle, somewhere between the present castle and cathedral sites. The existence, further south, of a *vicus* (which would naturally develop round any road-complex near the main gate of the fort), attested by finds of a civilian rather than a military character, suggests that the road from the south and that from the south-west may have met somewhere just south of the cathedral site.<sup>2</sup> Mr Robert Hogg's plan, in his paper on the Eden bridges (CW2 lii, facing p. 155), will help readers to appreciate this point. It is not usual for Roman roads to pass through important forts, and we may take it that this road started from some point in the *vicus* area, outside the fort's south gate, and turned south-westward towards Murrell Hill, where in 1878 there was found the tombstone of a woman and a child, now in the Carlisle Museum (CW1 iv 325); if this came from a roadside tomb, it would help to indicate the nearness of our road—just as the burials south of Carlisle line the Roman trunk road to Penrith and the south.

Beyond Murrell Hill, on the farm of Newlathes Hall, a farm track seems to continue the probable line of the road, leading to a high point, 172 ft. O.D., at 381541, where a small change in direction would bring the line to coincide with the alignment of the modern road from Newby Cross westwards. Documentary evidence is available for the existence of a road from Carlisle to Thursby as early as 1300; in a perambulation of the bounds of Inglewood Forest in 28 Edward I, cited in CW2 v 39 f., there is reference to a so-called "metalled way":

"Beginning at the bridge over Caldewe outside the city of Carlisle along the great metalled way to Thuresby the forest is on the south; and from Thuresby by (the same way through) the middle of the town of Thuresby to Waspatrick wath over the water of Wathenpole . . ."

<sup>2</sup> In the bishop of Cloyne's contribution to the Lysons' *Cumberland*, 1816, p. cxxxvi, at the end of his description of the course of a Roman road from Ellenborough (Maryport) via Old Carlisle, he notes that the last section of the road is "pointing to the Cathedral at Carlisle."

This is clear enough—if only we knew the exact site of the Caldew bridge in 1300!

The straight stretch of modern road between Newby Cross, 365530, and the hill at 335508, near Nealhouse, must lie over or very near to the Roman road, but the main interest of this section lies in its alignment, which is clearly based on Moota hill (144363), 825 ft. high, some 18 miles away; on most days the double clump of trees on its summit can easily be distinguished from Orton Grange. Near Nealhouse the road changed direction at 335508, and the next sighting point seems to have been the high ground, 236 ft. O.D., between Jenkins Cross and Forest Hall, the summit of which can just be seen from this last point (284477). This new line brings the road to a point 100 yards south of Old Carlisle, but its course from Nealhouse, through Thursby, to 308491 (where the next straight stretch of modern road begins) cannot now be traced on the ground. The modern road wanders north of the alignment, leaving a gap which I tried to bridge by searching the ground for traces of scattered metalling; but I was unsuccessful.

The Thursby gap has had the most attention, mainly because I live in the village and for that reason began my road researches there. I thought at first that all I had to do was to join the known ends of Roman road, near Nealhouse and Crofton Station, with a pencil line on the 6 in. map, and then search the ground on that line for traces of it; but my first effort was disappointing in the extreme: no scattered metalling in ploughed fields, no *agger*, not even a headrigg trackway or footpath was to be seen, but only two unconvincing cuttings. Later, however, I have gathered together a number of notes and observations which make it certain that the Roman road once continued across the gap exactly as I had assumed. The two cuttings are at 317497, south of Howend, and at 338491; both are inconspicuous, but both are on the correct alignment. The first would be required to take

the road down a rather steep slope on to the alluvial flats bordering the Wampool; the second, on quite a gentle slope, may have been dug to provide material for a causeway to take the road across the flood-plain of the river. There may be indirect evidence for the one-time existence of a raised earthen causeway in the slack, parallel and close to the line, in the first meadow north of the railway; the slack may well be the remains of a scoop ditch, and the road-metal was perhaps taken up, at the time of the enclosures, to form the lonning which runs for some distance parallel to the Roman line, on the north-west side. The river itself is bridged at 315497, and this may be the site of the 14th century Waspatic's wath; certainly the reference to the "great metalled way to Thuresby", already cited, may be taken as establishing the course of the road as far as the "Wathenpole", and the wath itself is named. Further documentary evidence, which I owe to the late Sir Walter Aitchison, explains my lack of success in following road-metal across ploughland: in Gough's 1806 edition of Camden (iii 1015 f.) it is recorded that an inscribed "rude stone" was found in Thursby "when the military way was taken up". I know from experience that it is not difficult to shovel away a Roman road, and if the metal was loaded into carts for use elsewhere, no trace would remain after only a few ploughings, except for the silted-up side ditches—which might betray their presence under favourable conditions, causing crop-marks. Such marks did appear, in the summer of 1951, in a field of ripening oats just west of Thursby, the parallel dark lines, about 45 ft. apart, appearing in the right place just before the corn was cut. Crop-marks appeared again in the dry July of 1955. Finally, the parish records show the course of a footpath, now no longer in use and difficult to trace on the ground, which follows very closely the line of the road, from the west end of the village towards the stone bridge over the Wampool at 315497, no doubt preserving a right of way

resulting from the earlier existence of the road and continued after the enclosure awards.

The straight two miles of modern road from 338490 to 287478 (this latter point being the highest part of the road between Jenkins Cross and Forest Hall) continue on the second main alignment and must cover the Roman road. There is a slight change of direction at the summit, where the modern road swings a trifle south, but I think that the Roman road continues without change, running just within the fields on the north of the modern line: in these fields I have noted some scattered metalling at various times; and certainly the feature to be seen in Speet Gill, three-quarters of a mile further west, is still on the same alignment. The west side of Speet Gill has been altered by quarrying, but the east side shows a sloping ramp by which a road descended; there is no certainty of its Roman origin, but at least it is in the right place. Just to the south of the present road, as it approaches the gill, may be seen traces of another road and a length of very deep and narrow cutting; I cannot accept this alternative as the course of the Roman road, for it is off the true alignment in a situation where the Roman engineers had no cause to deviate in order to overcome some difficult feature.

The modern road from the west edge of the gill is on the correct alignment, and within half a mile we reach the farm called "Street": the significance of its name needs no emphasis from me. A few yards further west, at 271469, the modern road turns away from the Roman line, which continues across open fields towards Old Carlisle. The Roman fort stands in a field which has never been ploughed, and still shows the mounds and ridges of the ruined buildings lining the road and the northwards branch which passed close to the east gate of the fort; here, for the first time since leaving Carlisle, we can follow the course of the Roman road with absolute certainty. It passes through the *vicus* half-way between

the fort and the modern road, converging on the latter and coinciding with it on the east brow of the valley of the Wiza. Dr St. Joseph's air-photographs (JRS xli, pl. IV 1) came to my notice at a very opportune time, not only confirming my observations on the ground but showing the two approach roads and the northwards branch. The section of the 6 in. sheet (fig. 1, p. 30), and another of Dr St. Joseph's air-photographs (pl. I facing p. 42), show part of the main Roman road, the buildings of the *vicus* bordering it, and the western approach-road making for the east gate of the fort.

I have traced the north-bound road from the east gate as far as the new secondary modern school, a straight length of just over one mile, pointing uncompromisingly towards Drumburgh (CW2 lii 45).<sup>3</sup> As regards roads southwards from Old Carlisle, there is some evidence for at least one road via Broadfield to Old Penrith (CW2 li 36), and there may have been a direct link with the fort at Brougham, but in both cases much field-work is still needed before these roads can be accepted as certain.

The hill-top by Red Dial, 255459; seems to be a change-point, for the next straight lengths of road, when joined together on the map, are seen to be on a new alignment on Moota Hill. Theoretically, for the next half-mile westwards from this point the Roman road should be just north of the modern one, and this was satisfactorily proved by the finding of road bottoming in the grounds of Greenhill House, 249455, when a trench was dug for a water service. At Bolton Low Houses the course of the road may be assumed from the existence of a cutting behind the houses on the north side of the modern road. At Brough Hill farm another trench showed road-bottoming, and the farm is aligned on the road. Mr Grindley, when I explained the significance of this to him, remarked that the next field had a very hard gravelly strip in it, obviously the continuation of the road;

<sup>3</sup> Cf. also Mr Eric Birley's paper on Old Carlisle, CW2 li 16 f. (especially Stukeley's account of what he saw in 1725, p. 20).

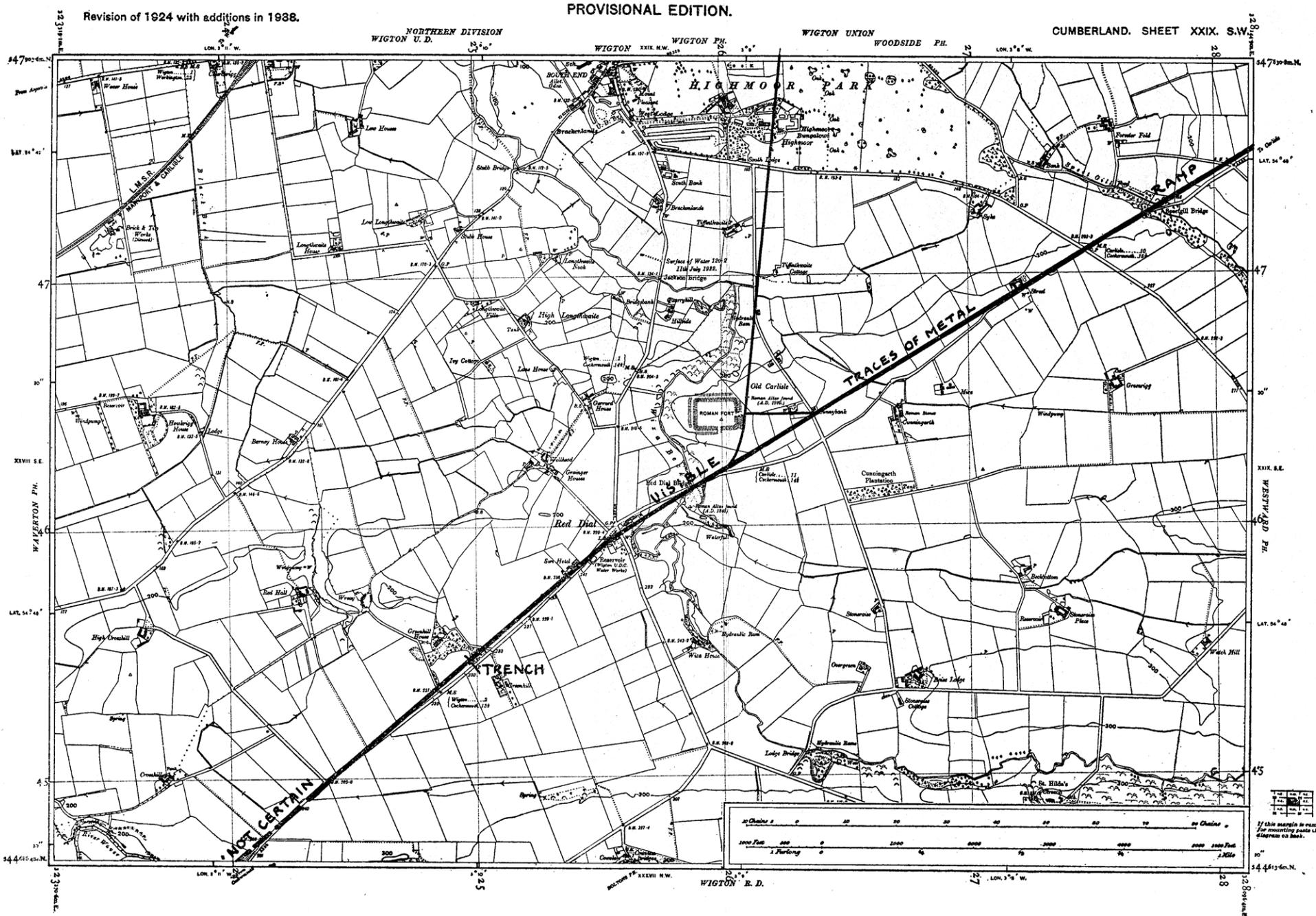


FIG. 1.—The Roman road passing Old Carlisle, with change of alignment at Red Dial.

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PL. I.—Roman Civil Settlement, Old Carlisle.

*Photo: J. K. St. Joseph.*

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at this point it is just over the hedge from the modern road, and continues on the same line as far as the lane leading to Waverbank. The first hundred yards of the lane are undoubtedly over the Roman line, but then it turns sharply northward, the Roman road continuing straight on, on the north side of the field dike, over the summit at Pattenfoot (224433), to continue as the next straight stretch of modern road to the Mealsgate gap. Between 214423 and 206416 the modern road is north of the line, but the gap has been satisfactorily bridged by the finding of road-metal in the eroded bank of a brook at 212422, and traces of a cutting fifty yards further west (not to be confused with the modern cutting for a mineral railway, now disused, which crosses the Roman line here). The large field (209420-207418), between the modern road and the plantations to the south, close by East Lodge, was ploughed in the spring of 1955, when I was able to trace the metalling, much disturbed of course, right across it to a point where I could confirm that the Roman road continued towards Cockbridge (199411) on exactly the line of the modern road, by sighting along it. Moota Hill is not visible from this point westwards, being concealed by the north shoulder of Wharrels Hill; it is possible that this latter feature was the actual sighting-point after the laying of the main alignments.

At Cockbridge the east slope of the little valley of the river Ellen has been altered in fairly recent times, but the west slope shows two parallel cuttings; the less obvious one, because it is on the correct line, must be accepted as Roman. Further on, at 194406, near the farm of Low Wood Nook, ploughing in the field regularly turns up metalling and road-bottoming, still on the correct alignment.

The next two miles lie over uncomplicated country, but no certain remains of the road can be found. The farm-name "Overgates" (186398) may be significant, if derived from the Old Norse *gata*, signifying "above the

road"—which would be an accurate description from our point of view. Bothel Beck runs across our line in a limestone gorge, and at 182395, where the Roman road should have crossed it, quarrying has removed much rock and likewise any tell-tale cuttings that might have been visible; a little way up the gorge, however, there are distinct traces of shallow cuttings which could have carried a road at an easier crossing. A small local divergence here would have been necessary: the Roman engineers often adopted such a course, as may be seen for example on the Maryport-Papcastle road near Dovenby. The next mile of road cannot now be traced, for extensive quarrying along its probable course makes search useless; but very satisfying evidence may be found beyond the quarries.

On the north side of Wharrels Hill (172383, 725 ft. O.D.), still on the same alignment, I found several hundred yards of grass-grown *agger*; as I walked westwards along it, its profile was clearly outlined against the evening sky, and as I reached the highest point of the road, and the countryside between Moota and Wharrels Hill came into view, the road turned a little southwards, away from the Moota Hill line, and I lost track of it in enclosed land. But there is little doubt that this last change of direction would bring the road to meet the section now in view on the south side of Moota Hill.

The road over Wharrels Hill is about 20 ft. wide, without certain traces of side ditches, and the whole length visible (172386-169384) at the time of my first visit, in 1950, had certainly been ploughed over, though not for very many years. Part was ploughed in 1953, when I was surprised to note the complete absence of a distinguishable gravel spread on its line; but in 1954 the existence of the remains of the road, under the plough, was amply confirmed when I happened to be near while ploughing was in progress: the plough growled and lurched in protest at every crossing, but only occasional cobbles were lifted up to the surface of the ground.

The virtual disappearance of the metalling, and the persistence of the bottoming under plough, have been noted in a number of places. The process is of interest because part of the explanation lies in the use of local materials by the Roman engineers. The road surfacing, when spread by the plough, cannot be distinguished from the small stones which occur naturally in almost every field with a soil derived from glacial materials. Continued cultivation dilutes the concentration of small stones on the line of the road, to a point when it is impossible to decide if any variation might not be due to other causes. There are notable exceptions where roads cross peats and alluvial soil, but even in such cases the road might have only a very light gravel surfacing, its trail of stones therefore not being very convincing.

The road-bottoming is usually made up of a layer of hard, rounded cobbles, such as may be found in becks and in the glacial drift. The plough, after skinning off the gravel surfacing, appears to ride over the cobbles rather than dig them out; but kerbing and any prominent stone is lifted up, and is eventually carried off by the farmer. For any cobble to be lifted out of the ground, the point of the ploughshare must strike it in the centre-line and below the "equator"; because of the camber, the point nearly always hits above the "equator", and rides up and over to the next cobble, which may be slightly higher, and so on to the crest of the road.

The phenomenon was observed at Burrow Walls in the spring of 1955: the clay and cobble base of the east wall of the Roman fort lies in a field which has been in cultivation for many years, and although it is covered by only a few inches of soil, it has remained practically undisturbed by the plough. Only a few cobbles may be seen on the surface, along the line of the rampart. But it must be noted that the rampart lies along a headrigg, and that the point of the plough therefore meets no edge which would enable it to penetrate below the cobbles.

Threapland Gill (162373) provides the next focus of interest. In crossing this not very serious obstacle we meet, for the first time, with the hollow ways which are so very characteristic of ancient cross-country routes. Hollow ways result from centuries of pack-horse traffic following the line of the Roman road at one side of it or the other, not necessarily keeping to the metalled way; when one "trod" gets too deep, another is made on harder ground nearby. The banks of the gill show at least seven distinct crossings, all so close together that it is

certain that some of them have cut into the Roman crossing, which is therefore extremely hard to identify. As if this were not enough, there is an 18th century road, part of which is in a wide and shallow steep-sided cutting, to complicate the picture still further. The course of this road can be followed with ease, for some hundreds of yards across the field on the east of the gill; as it is very close to the Roman line, it may cover the Roman road: but there are indications that the latter was just a few yards north of it, where the probe indicates a stony layer. The field also shows wheat rigs (relics of the "Golden age") and heaps of stone, which mean that the road will have been seriously disturbed.

To west of the gill a small quarry cuts across the line, and some doubtful road-metal may be seen in the section exposed, as well as a hollow way immediately north of it. Beyond the quarry, exactly on the line of the modern road from Cockermouth, distinct changes in the vegetation could be seen every year at 161372, seeming to indicate the presence of side ditches about 40 ft. apart and a roadway 18-20 ft. wide between them. This land was drained in 1954; but although trenches crossed the marks five or six times, there was very little to be seen in them: some rather fresh-looking soil overlay a thin gravel spread, without kerbs or bottoming, and ditches could just be made out (but not very convincingly), while the metalling was mixed with much humus. I was reminded of the Drumburgh road, but circumstances are so different here—abundant road-metal, and dry ground—that it is difficult to explain such slight construction. But the drought in July 1955 settled my doubts about the correct course of the section between 169384 and 161372; standing on the road at the highest point of the little hill at 161372, which is clearly a change-point, and looking east towards the last certain section of road, I could clearly see crop-marks on the line between these two points.

By the 20th milestone from Carlisle, at 160370, the modern and Roman roads again run together, and for the next two miles the course of the Roman road may safely be assumed to be either under, or just to one side of, the modern road. There may be a slight change in direction at the summit 152361 (656 ft. O.D.), and the possible alignment for the next section may be from this point to the hilltop at 133340 (509 ft. O.D.), where the modern road runs south of the line, and I was able to confirm the presence of the remains of the Roman road under the turf, across the fields from the farm at 136344 to the ash tree on the roadside at 133339, with my probe. Westwards from this point the line may be along the modern road, which has some slight bends in it: for what catches the eye is the hedge-bank, first on the south side of the road and then, further west, on the north side. This is unusually wide and very stony; and at a point where part of the bank has been cut away, some time ago, in order to widen the modern road, I was able to find substantial traces of an old road high up in the bank. Traffic here has presumably cut through the Roman road, forming a sunken track in which the modern road was subsequently made. Where the Cockermouth road turns sharply south, the road to Bridekirk continues the line, and there seem to be traces of metalling just over the hedges of the first two fields on the south side of his road, and the line is now certainly making for the hill at 123328 (437 ft. O.D.).

This last point completes my catalogue of observations; for, in spite of the promising lines which suggest themselves on the map, I have quite failed to find any evidence on the ground over the last two miles to Papcastle. This gap contains no really difficult country, and the most obvious "pencil bridge" to join our last point with the causeway shown on R. G. Collingwood's plan of the Roman fort at Papcastle (CW2 xiii, facing p. 135) gives a new line, with only a slight change of direction from the alignment of the last certain section.

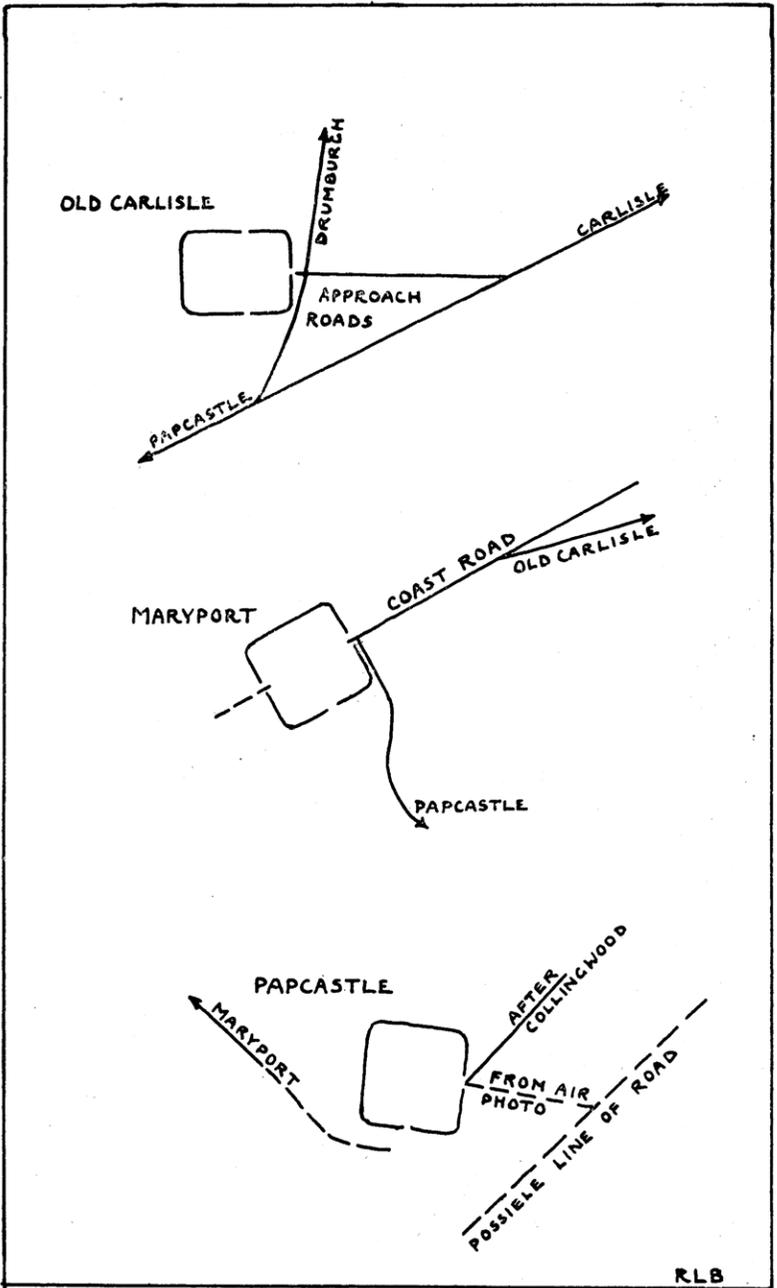


FIG. 2.—Roman roads at Old Carlisle, Maryport and Papcastle.

If we postulate a change of direction at 133340 of only 2°, the alternative line has the merits of avoiding an unnecessary ascent and coinciding, between 114321 and 115317, with the course of the old road from Cockermouth to Carlisle; furthermore this line, if continued, passes south of the fort, through the *vicus* area and towards a convenient crossing of the Derwent (CW1 i 169). If comparison with the road-complex at Old Carlisle may be permitted, there is evidence in one of Dr St. Joseph's photographs for a length of road leaving the east gate of Papcastle fort in an easterly direction, to form an approach-road joining our suggested course for the main Roman road at 115315. To complete the comparison, the Roman road from Maryport to Papcastle approaches the fort, and appears to pass it, on the south-west.

I find this lay-out satisfying, but the causeway on Collingwood's plan, so obviously leaving the east gate in the direction of Old Carlisle, suggests comparison with the fort at Maryport rather than with Old Carlisle. At Maryport a road leaves the north gate of the fort, soon to divide, one branch continuing along the coast, the other turning inland towards Allerby and Oughterside; the road to Papcastle issues from the east gate, as does a road pointing southwards towards the river (CW xxxvi 87 f.).

Even if we accept comparison with Maryport rather than with Old Carlisle, the last gap in the road can only be closed by intense field-work along the theoretical lines. There still remains the question of the destination of the eastward road revealed by Dr St. Joseph's photograph; field-work is needed here too, but the Maryport-Ambleside road is now certain via Whinlatter, and this may perhaps be the start of the middle portion towards Lorton, aiming for a point on the Derwent above the mouth of the Cocker, in order to avoid two river crossings and the steep-sided Cocker valley.

The difficulty about the road on Collingwood's plan (CW2 xiii 138) is that it must cross the ditches outside the fort. A similar case exists at Burrow Walls, where a lonning approaches the south rampart at an acute angle; Collingwood (CW2 xxix 160) thought that this might well be a Roman road, but there are two ditches outside the fort, and a road here would have to cross them to reach the south gate. But if these sections of road were made in the third century or later, when some Roman sites were re-fortified (in some cases, on a reduced scale), they might have been laid over ditches partly silted and rubble-filled. Fragments of samian ware found in the road-metal at Papcastle during Collingwood's excavation in 1912 suggest the use of second-hand materials: but the problem then becomes—what were these later roads built for, if they were in fact later.

(b) *The alignments.*

Study of the main alignments of the road, as drawn on the 1 in. map, reveals many interesting points. There are first the two fundamental sightings, Carlisle to Moota Hill and Papcastle to Wharrels Hill; then the slight divergence at Nealhouse, causing a maximum divergence from the Moota line, at Old Carlisle, of less than three-quarters of a mile, with the re-alignment on Moota Hill at Red Dial. It is when we attempt other alignments on the map that we discover how well the Roman engineers did their survey. A straight line between Carlisle and Old Carlisle crosses three morasses, the impossible glacial sandheaps between Thursby and Crofton, Moorthwaite Lough and precipitous slopes to westward; but the Roman road just misses all these, following comparatively high ground. If the first Moota Hill section is continued beyond Nealhouse, natural difficulties will be met again: the steep gill at 312487, the glacial overflow channel between Brackenthwaite and Forest Hall, the steep valleys of the Wiza and Waver and their tributaries, and the high ground of Quarry Hill. A straight line between Carlisle and Papcastle would cross further natural obstacles and even higher ground.

The two lengths from Old Carlisle to Papcastle diverge

no more than half a mile from the bee-line, but this again puts the road on a more satisfactory route. Throughout, the conclusion is inescapable: the Romans surveyed and planned their roads with exceptional thoroughness. In all the 26 miles of the road there is not one instance of it changing direction in order to avoid a difficult feature: the difficulties are all avoided by the planning of the basic lay-out.

## II. MARYPORT TO OLD CARLISLE.<sup>4</sup>

A direct road linking Old Carlisle with the Roman fort at Maryport has always seemed to me to be one of those obvious things which, because they are so obvious, do not exist. Certainly search of the ground, examination of maps and the planning and abandonment of possible alignments, at various times over a number of years, failed to reveal any significant lines between the two forts to justify the close scrutiny of the ground which is necessary, to establish the existence of traces of a Roman road.

In spite of J. B. Bailey's confident tracing of a Roman road eastwards from Maryport as far as Crosscanonby vicarage (CW2 iv 250 f.), I was quite unable to continue his line, and the only clues that I could find on the 1 in. map were the site of Oughterside Hall (122406) exactly on a line joining the fort at Maryport with the hilltop at Red Dial, and Crookdake Hall (198443) three-quarters of a mile to north of this line; but, topographically, the last four miles are over difficult country, and they duplicate part of the Old Carlisle to Papcastle route quite unnecessarily.

A fresh line of approach coincided with my discovery of references to this road, which at last enabled me to find it on the ground. The main road to Papcastle, which

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Lysons' *Cumberland*, p. cxxix f. (especially p. cxxxvi); Chancellor Ferguson, CW1 iii 76; Joseph Robinson, CW1 v 237 and 254; J. B. Bailey, CW2 iv 250 (and CW1 ix 435).

is 18-21 ft. wide, must have been in use by A.D. 100;<sup>5</sup> the fortification of the Cumberland coast, early in the second century, may well have created the need for a secondary road direct to Maryport, and the simplest course would be to find a point on the existing road, westward of Old Carlisle, where a satisfactory line could be laid off to Maryport. This, it seems, is precisely what the Roman surveyors did.

The first reference that I found is in the bishop of Cloyne's contribution to Lysons' *Cumberland*, p. cxxxvi:

"The third of these roads [from Maryport] passes through Mr Senhouse's estate, crosses the road from Crosby to Crosscanonby, goes through Allerby, over Outerside Common, through Baggerhay [i.e. Baggrow], over Bolton Pasture and Shaking Bridge, and by Red Deal, to the Station at Old Carlisle, which it leaves close on its left . . ."

The second reference is quoted by Chancellor Ferguson, CWI iii 76, giving the course of the road in the reverse direction:

". . . along the present turnpike road, nearly to Waverbridge, then along the high ground behind Waverbank Farm, north of Priestcroft colliery, where, as it crosses the road to Crookdale (*sic*), it may still be seen; then over Leesrigg Pasture, and Oughterside Moor . . ."

The places mentioned in these two extracts can be identified readily, with the exception of Shaking Bridge—which may be an error for Waverbridge (which is at the crossing of the Little Waver), and the branching-off point may be the summit of the little hill (231439) midway between Brough Hill and the turning to Waterside. The next stage in the investigation was reference, first to the 1 in. map for satisfactory alignments, and then to the 6 in. sheets for greater detail; I chose sheet XXXVI NE (1926 ed.), and was fortunate in my choice, for at once I was able to pencil in a line of hedges nearly two miles long, on a line from a point 300 yards north of Waverbank,

<sup>5</sup> Cf. I. A. Richmond, *Roman Britain* (Pelican History of England i, 1955), 41, fig. 2.

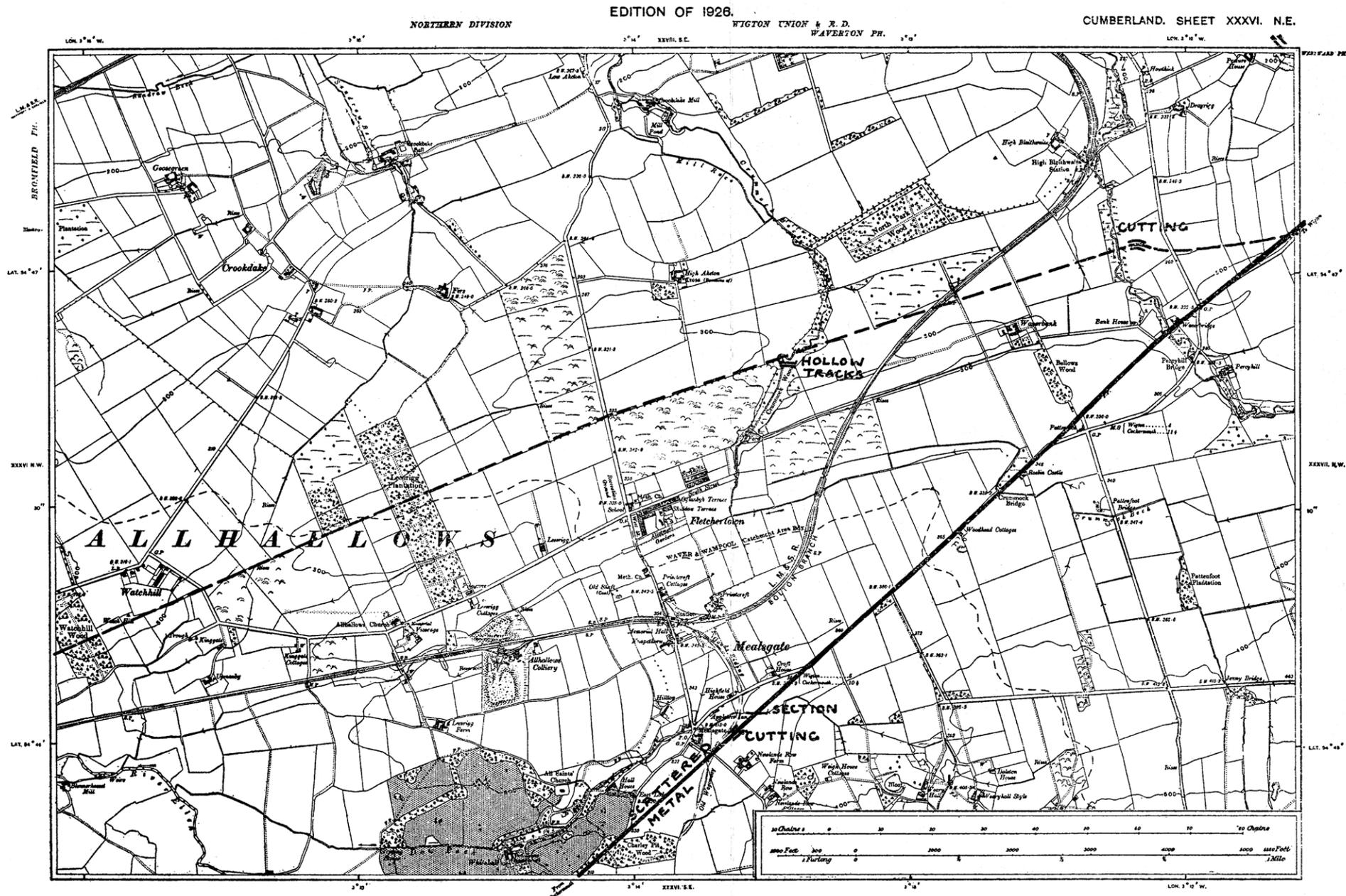


FIG. 3.—Part of the main Roman road from Old Carlisle to Papcastle. A broken line marks the course of the minor road to Maryport.

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south-westwards to Baggrow. Just over 1,000 yards of this line is also the boundary between the parishes of Waverton and Allhallows, and where the road to Crookdale is crossed, at a high point (335 ft. O.D.), there is a slight change in direction of about  $2\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ . The line traverses three plantations, and coincides with 100 yards of lonning close to Watchhill; but it is the plantations which focus attention. The first of them, Leesrigg Plantation, has the line across it as a "ride"; the next, 200 yards west, has a ride just within its south boundary, on the line; and Watchhill Wood, at the west edge of the sheet, shows 100 yards of ride also on the line. It is likely that these plantations date from the last enclosure awards, and may therefore never have been under plough; in that case, substantial traces of road might easily be found in them. I regarded Watchhill Wood as being the most interesting, because the ride on the line traverses only about two-thirds of the wood, and therefore metalling, on the line in the third where no ride is shown, would be doubly significant.

An opportunity for field-work soon came, and I went first to Watchhill Wood. I was immediately satisfied by what I found. The ride formed a clear avenue among the scrub, a grassy *agger* was plainly visible, satisfactorily gritty and stony where probed. I followed the *agger* westwards, here slightly downhill, and was able to see the house roofs of Baggrow across the next two fields, and at the same time to establish the alignment of this section by identifying, in the far distance, the tree-clad hill on which Crosby stands. Equally clear was the pit-dump of Birkby Colliery, a little to the left—and the remains of the *agger* on which I stood pointed directly to Crosby.

The *agger* ceases abruptly at the west edge of the wood, where the line enters cultivated ground, but foundation cobbles appear in the dividing dike. Retracing my steps, I pushed my way through the undergrowth to a point on

the line where no ride is shown on the plan, towards the east side of the wood. Here trials with the probe found the significant stony layer once more. I next visited Leesrigg Plantation, where I found much the same evidence: the *agger* there is a little less wide than the four yards given by Bailey, but this is clearly due to the digging of modern ditches on either side, as in some places stone could be felt by probing in the ditch-bottoms.

Further search, at a later date, enabled me to extend this line. Westward from Baggrow there are signs that the line of trees on a rather poor dike, just north of Baggrow Farm, is a continuation of it; and probing in the park-land south of Brayton Hall (174420) seems to show a stony area under the soil on the same line. Eastward, where the above-mentioned parish boundary meets Crummock Beck (213436), there is a strip of natural woodland adjoining the beck on its east side; here I found well-developed pack-horse hollow ways, sufficient evidence for the existence of an ancient route hereabouts, but doubly significant at this point, as indicating the presence of a Roman road nearby. Signs of metalling or fragments of road-foundation cannot be identified at the crossing; there might be scattered metalling in the field on the west bank, now under plough, but the soil there is stony in any case—and the beck has changed its course here many times, much erosion taking place. Further east, at the crossing of the Little Waver (226440), another strip of natural woodland remains, this time on the west side of the stream; the descent to the stream is not steep, and there are some faint traces of tracks. East of the stream there is a flat strip of holme, and then the ground rises very steeply; here there is a gully, which looks entirely natural—but its presence in this situation, right on the line, where the Romans would have been forced to make a ramp or cutting (or both), gives it special significance.

It is disappointing that so little trace of the road is to

be found nowadays, but 100 years of farming have smoothed the face of the countryside, scattered the road-metal with harrow and plough, carting off the larger stones and levelling up cuttings and hollow tracks, the last and most persistent features to remain. I have not been able to fix the course of the road, even approximately, between Baggrow and Allerby, and so we must accept its existence from the early accounts.

In illustration of the way in which chance field-observations add up I insert this note. Some months after writing the above account, I had occasion to visit land on the north side of the railway by the Aspatria Co-operative Bakery and west of the sewage works, and here I found a shelf on a bank-side sloping down to a small stream, whose banks showed the foundation cobbles and disturbed metalling of an old road (136407). Later, at home, reference to the 1 in. map (which had my trial alignments upon it) indicated that this fragment of road was on the continuation of the line joining Allerby and Oughterside. There is no proof that this shelf is Roman, but if we accept it as such—because of its significant position—it helps to tie in the possible course between this point and Baggrow, where we must postulate a slight change of alignment in order to keep the road clear of the Ellen and the marshy ground on its north side.

Certainly the ground offers no obstacles, and consideration of the probable alignment of the sections reveals Roman characteristics. Although the simple direct alignment from Maryport fort via Crosby to the high ground just north of Fletchertown has not been used, except for the eastern portion of the route, there is no obvious engineering reason why the road should pass to the north of Crosby. An explanation for the course of the road in its western section, from the neighbourhood of Maryport fort, seems easier to arrive at; but it depends on a consideration of Joseph Robinson's investigations, with Collingwood's discussion of them (CW1 v 237 f., CW2 xxxvi 85 f.), and it must be reserved for attention on a later occasion. Meanwhile, we may be justified in regarding this road as a secondary connecting link, leaving open the question whether it was provided under

Hadrian (when the Cumberland coast was being fortified) or in the 3rd century (to meet the needs of the growing civil settlements at Maryport and Old Carlisle alike).

### III. PAPCASTLE TO EGREMONT AND TO MORESBY.<sup>6</sup>

It has usually been assumed that the main Roman road from Carlisle to Papcastle continued to the coast at Moresby,<sup>7</sup> but search along the direct line has yielded no trace of it. Now it seems clear that the fort at Moresby, like those at Burrow Walls and Beckfoot further north, was an addition to the scheme of coastal defence, made in or shortly after A.D. 128: and we should expect it to have been linked to the pre-existing road-system by the construction of a special branch-road. We can be certain that there was a road inland from Moresby to Papcastle, in view of Stukeley's positive account in the *Iter Boreale*:<sup>8</sup> "There are evident signs of a Roman road . . . all the way, especially over the moor", but it does not follow that this link was necessarily a straight line joining the two places.

My first clue to the course of such a link came from the *Register of Holm Cultram* (this Society's Record Series vii, 1929), I:

Gylgaran. Geryn Keld heid under Standyngston. Frenchou otherwise callyed Frostyknotte lying beneath Roukkrofte vnto the greatt waye. [Note in 15th century hand, referring to charters 89 and 92.]

Charter 89, making a grant of 20 acres in Distington shortly before 1320, notes that its bounds include "the great road under Frothou [or Frotheu] towards Dene"; this can hardly refer to anything but a Roman road, the

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Lysons' *Cumberland*, p. cxxxvii; Chancellor Ferguson, CW1 iii 71 f. and plan facing p. 64; John Dixon and William Dickinson, *ibid.*, 337 f. and 343 f.; M. C. Fair, CW2 liii 213 f.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. CW2 li 31 (Eric Birley), and I. A. Richmond, *Roman Britain* (1955), plan facing p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> *Itinerarium Curiosum*, 2nd ed. (1776), 54; for Moresby fort, reference may be made to Mr. Eric Birley's study, CW2 xlvi 42-72.

direction of which it gives us, namely from Gilgarran towards Dean. The editors add (*op. cit.*, 33), on the authority of H. Valentine and J. R. Mason, that the "great road" ran past Colingate, not on the line of the present road past Studfold.

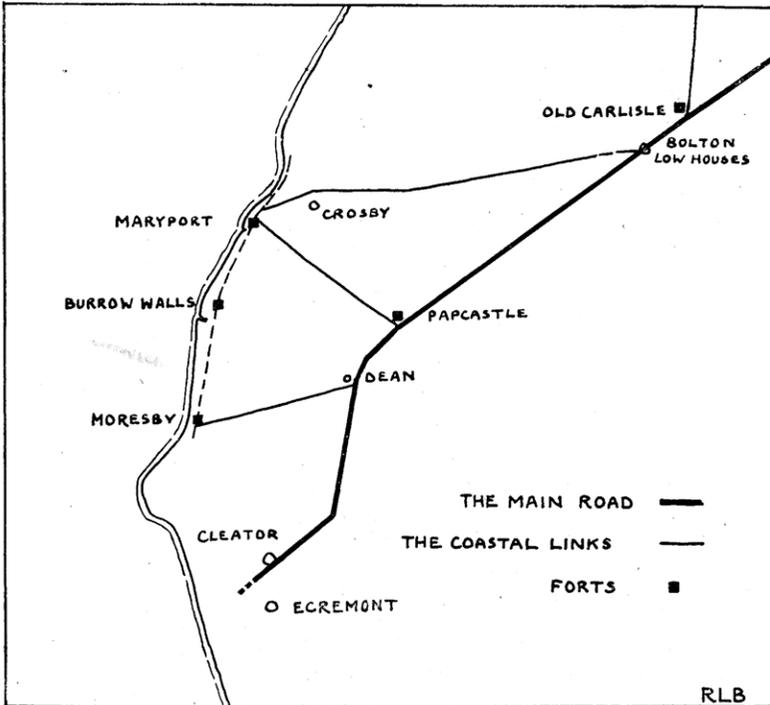


FIG. 4.—Roman roads in West Cumberland.

Reference to the 1 in. map, and the drawing of a pencil line from the fort at Moresby to the village of Dean, showed that the road past Colingate was indeed on a most satisfying alignment, and might well lie on Roman foundations. The case for it being a branch thrown off by the Papcastle-Egremont road, probably close to Dean, seems very strong, and it remains only for field-work to

discover traces of the road on the ground. To complete the case for the branch, however, it is essential to fix the line of the main road itself; fortunately, the accounts of early observers enable us to do this with reasonable accuracy.

Hutchinson's *Cumberland* (1794), ii 106, is our first source:

"Near Eaglesfield lately was discovered, in various places, a little below the surface, an old paved way, seven yards in width, leading north and south, formed of large flatstones (*sic*), chiefly of freestone."

Lysons' *Cumberland* (1816), p. cxxxvii, referring to the same road, gives its width as 18 ft., on the authority of the Rev. James Fullerton. But the fullest and most impressive account comes in William Dickinson's article, "On and off the Roman road from Papcastle to Lamplugh Woodmoor", CW1 iii 342 ff., and it seems proper to quote the relevant passages in full, as a basis for further field-work:

(a) P. 343: "Entering Brigham Township, the track of the road runs diagonally through a field belonging to Mr William Fletcher, of Brigham Hill; and skirting the wood, gradually ascends the limestone bluffs of Hotchberry and Tendlay, . . . and from whence an extensive view of the country is had, including a long stretch of the Roman road. It passes on the west of the village of Eaglesfield to another elevation southwards . . . The line is traceable half-a-mile to the south of Eaglesfield, where it tops a hill having a good outlook on every side."

(b) P. 345: "Following the same route in nearly a direct line to the village of Dean, . . . Approaching the village of Ullock, the Roman roadway there was plundered of its boulders about twenty years ago [i.e. *circa* 1850] . . . Passing into the parish of Lamplugh the first indication is Streetgate, a name strongly suggestive of the Roman way which passed near, and its apparent foundations (p. 346) have lately been unearthed between that place and Todhole . . ."

At this point we may turn to the late Miss Fair's note, CW2 liii 213 f., recording observations made in January and February 1953, and giving details on the line of the

section shown on the 1 in. map; for the first time, an account is given of the road's construction, hereabouts only 12 ft. wide and kerbed with freestone. Miss Fair gave the further course of the road as running through Frizington Parks and Cleator to somewhere west of Egremont; here, I think, she was probably following John Dixon's article, "A contribution to the map of Roman Cumberland", *CWI* iii 337 f., which deserves attention, for it appears to be based on first-hand investigation:

(c) P. 338: "Approaching Egremont [from the south], at the places where the turnpike road has been opened, traces of a well-paved former road were found near to 'Street Bridge', not far from which is 'Causeway', corrupted to 'Keesay' Bridge. Most worthy of note is that paved road recently found at St. Thomas' Cross, where, for a hundred and fifty yards, or as far as the cutting extended, there was discovered at a varying depth below the existing surface, a compact pavement resembling undoubtedly Roman work . . . This more ancient road dipped to a little ravine on the south (p. 339) which it evidently crossed at an open wath . . . it was composed of the boulders of the neighbourhood, roughly paved in, and pointed in the direction of Egremont."

(d) P. 339: "North of Egremont the road was in the early part of this century dug up and removed from farm lands: it would lead to near Croft end, and there turning, pass through a field south of Cleator Hall, and thence along the present main street of Cleator village, a few fields to the north of which we again come with certainty upon it in a field called 'London Street', at about a hundred and thirty yards from Wath Brow. The road here was, within living memory, used by carts on their way from the Moor to Cleator, with the street of which it is in a direct line . . . Producing the line of this road northward, there are evident traces of it proceeding through fields to the Mere Stone, north of which it would for some distance be identical with the existing highway. Again the road is found in Frizington Park, a compact well-made road about twenty feet broad and eighteen inches below the present surface . . ."<sup>9</sup>

These extracts provide sufficient information for the course of the road to be plotted on the 1 in. map. Tendlay Hill (089288, 435 ft. O.D.) may well have been a sighting-

<sup>9</sup> This is marked on the O.S. 6 in. sheets, LXVIII N.W., S.W. 1926 ed.

point for the last section of road from Old Carlisle to Papcastle, for a line from this point to the hill-top, 509 ft. O.D. at 133340, passes through the *vicus* area south of Papcastle fort and crosses the Derwent where a ford would be practicable. I have spied out the land from Tendlay, now encroached upon by limestone quarries, and the possibilities for sighting roads to the south-west are satisfying. The next point to fit the description is the hill-top (465 ft. O.D. at 082275), south-west of Eaglesfield, reached by a turn of  $13^\circ$  at Tendlay, and if this too was a turning-point, a turn of  $15^\circ$  here would produce a line passing very close to Dean and through Ullock, to connect with the course of the section shown on the 1 in. sheet north of Lamplugh. Producing the line of this section southward to 073196 (520 ft. O.D.), and postulating a turn of  $35^\circ$  to the west, we can draw a line which will join together the recorded section of road in Frizington Parks (O.S. 6 in., sheet LXVIII as above) and the other places mentioned by John Dixon or by Miss Fair.

It can be said at once that the road shows features of lay-out and construction which are characteristically Roman, but so far I have found no certain remains of it between Papcastle and Ullock. Between Ullock and Lamplugh I have been more fortunate: close by Scallow Beck (073196) metalling and freestone kerbing can be seen in the side of the gill, where the stream has eroded the subsoil, and a little south of this point there are clear traces of ancient quarry-pits. At other places on the line of the section, as shown on the 1 in. sheet, traces of metalling can still be found.

The destination of this road is outside the scope of the present paper, and indeed outside the parts of Cumberland which I know fairly well; but its width of 21 ft., both near Eaglesfield and near Egremont (despite its narrowness in the section studied by Miss Fair), indicates that it should be the continuation of the main route from Carlisle, aiming presumably for the port and fort at Ravenglass in

the first instance. Once the road, as now elucidated, is plotted on the map, the case seems conclusive for regarding the Moresby road as a branch leaving it in the neighbourhood of Dean. The view from the high ground just south of that village (079252) is good, both south towards Lamplugh and south-west to Gilgarran, and this point would be a fine starting-place for alignments over the moor to Moresby; but there are no traces of the road hereabouts.