ART. III.—*Excavations at Bowness-on-Solway, 1973.*

By T. W. POTTER, M.A., Ph.D.

Read at Seascale, July 4th, 1975.

IN November 1973 the writer was invited by the Department of the Environment to undertake a rescue excavation on the site of the Roman fort at Bowness (*Maia*).The site lay north of the modern road, in Mill Field (NY 22176267), where a bungalow was to be built and the field also to be stripped of topsoil. Mill Field had already been the focal point for a number of earlier excavations. In 1930, Professor Eric Birley dug several sections along the western side of the defences of the Roman fort, and located part of the West Gate.[1] In 1955, Charles Daniels investigated the area west of the defences, but found only a thin scatter of Roman and medieval pottery and no evidence for structures.[2] Finally, in 1967, J. D. Mohamed dug a section across the western defences and extending into the interior of the fort; however, these excavations were not completed, due to bad weather, and remain only summarily published.[3]

These three small-scale excavations represent more or less the sum of recent archaeological work at Bowness, and little is therefore known of the character of the site or its chronological development. It was, however, of some importance, being the most westerly of the forts along Hadrian's Wall and, in addition, the second largest,[4] being nearly seven acres in area. More-

1 CW2 xxxi 140-145.
2 CW2 lx 13-19.
3 *University of Durham Gazette,* xv (New Series), no. 2, 29 July 1968, 17; reprinted in *Archaeological Newsbulletin for Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland,* no. 12 (September 1971), 17. I am indebted to Miss B. Harbottle and Mr C. W. Daniels for these references.
4 After Stanwix at 9.32 acres (Collingwood Bruce, *Handbook to the Roman Wall,* 12th edition (1966), 194). For Bowness, E. Birley, *Research on Hadrian's Wall* (1961), 213. R. L. Bellhouse discusses the Bowness area in CW2 lxix 65-79.

over, it seems to have developed into a flourishing medieval settlement whose nucleus lay mainly within the confines of the Roman fort.

The present excavations had to be arranged at short notice, and took place over a period of ten days in December 1973. The weather conditions were almost continuously atrocious and the whole field was soon buried beneath a thick layer of glutinous mud. Moreover, every trench was subject to rapid ground water seepage which necessitated constant mopping and recleaning of features. Technically, therefore, the site was more or less unworkable for much of the period of the excavation and it is inevitable that some features of archaeological interest were missed. However, it is only appropriate at this point to record the heroic efforts, under these appalling conditions, of the volunteer team, recruited almost entirely from the University of Lancaster; without exceptional perseverance on the part of this team, very little could have been achieved.[5] In fact, only one trench, in the north-east part of the site (Fig. 2), had to be abandoned, since no definition of features proved possible. The rest of the site was fairly thoroughly examined by means of a number of trenches, some of them machine-cut. Obviously it would have been desirable to have stripped the entire field, but arrangements for the new building were by then too far advanced.

[5] The team included: the Mrs Clayton, Gwilliam; the Misses Lockwood, Prowse, Sayers, Steele and Tutty; Messrs Bagshawe, Clayton, Doughty, Fisher, Friel, Hakiel, Hale, Hutt, Lowe, Stylianou and Witherington. Dr David Shotter was Assistant Supervisor and took many of the photographs. I would also like to thank Mr and Mrs T. Irving, the landowners, for their warm hospitality, and the staff of Blaithwaite House, Wigton, where the team was most comfortably accommodated. The excavation was financed by the Department of the Environment and this report prepared with facilities provided by the Department of Classics and Archaeology, the University of Lancaster.

Topography (Fig. 1; Plate I).

The village of Bowness occupies a low but prominent clay knoll beside the Solway Firth. The northern edge of the knoll is formed by a steep cliff, some 10-12 m. in height. Elsewhere the ground drops gradually away into low-lying pasture and marsh. The slope is least pronounced on the south side where the prominent *agger* of the road to Kirkbride is plainly visible in the grass field to the south-west of the church. Hollows

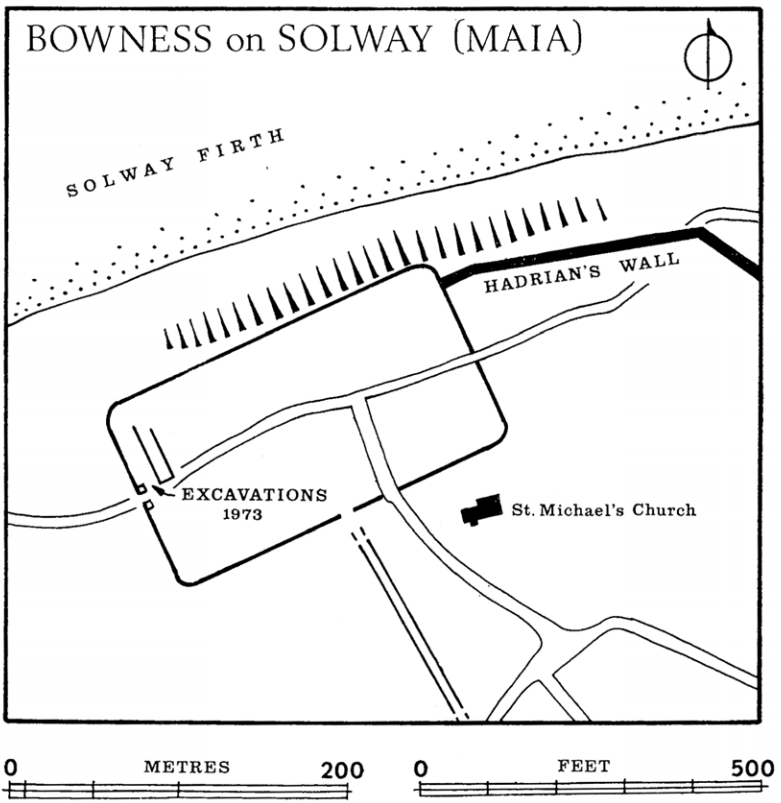

FIG. 1.—General plan of the fort at Bowness.

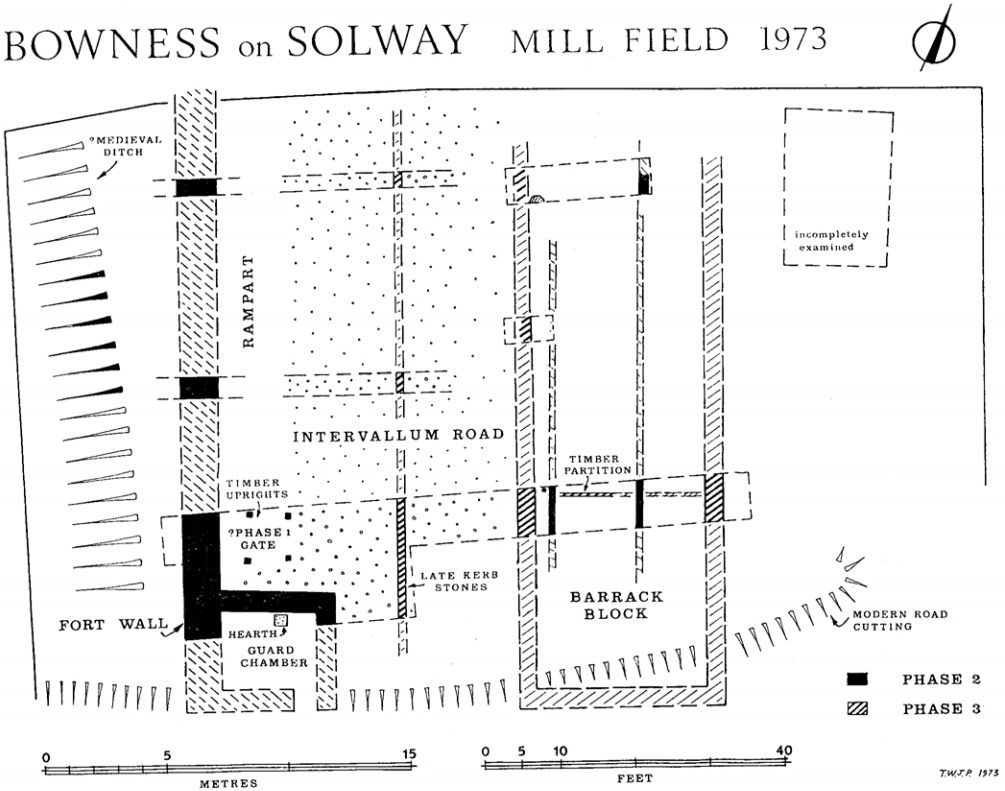

FIG. 2.—General plan of the excavations.

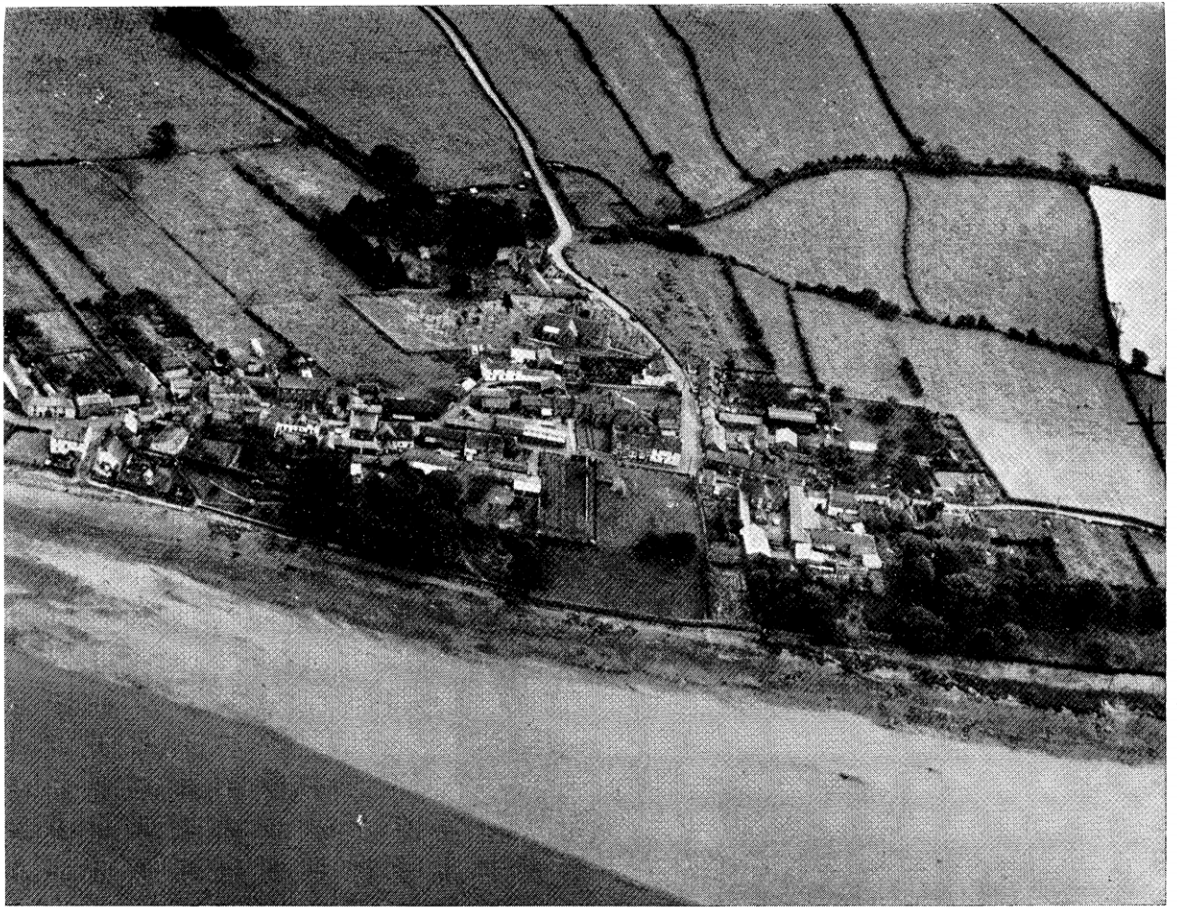

Photo: J. K. St Joseph
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PLATE I.—Bowness, looking south-east.

Photo: T. W. J. Potter

PLATE II.—The West Gate area, looking north-east.
(Compare with Fig. 3).

Photo: J. Thompson

PLATE III.—Inscribed stone (Scale in cm.).

and platforms in the pasture suggest that this was also the site of the *vicus*.[6]

Birley's work in 1930 showed that the present-day village clusters on the central and eastern area of the fort. To the west the ground rises to around 18 m. above sea level and the village buildings thin out. It is this higher ground which formed the site of the present excavations.

The Excavations.

The main structural sequence was determined from a long trench sited along the southern edge of Mill Field (Fig. 2). Further trenches were cut by hand and machine in the northern part of the field, in order to corroborate details of the plan, but the central and eastern sections of the field were not available for excavation. The following sequence was revealed:

Phase 1.

The subsoil consisted of an ill-drained sticky orange clay, with patches of alluvial silt. This was overlain in all parts of the site by a layer of white clay (Fig. 4, unit 12), apparently put down both as a foundation for structures and to level the site. Three structural features may be assigned to the earliest phase of occupation. At the west end of the site, part of what was probably the original West Gate was found (Figs. 2, 3). The surviving evidence consisted of four square timber post sockets, 20 x 20 cm. Only one post socket was completely excavated and this was found to be 60 cm. in depth. It had been packed around with stones and set in a large circular post-pit, 1.70 m. in diameter. The post had been withdrawn and the socket

[6] E. Birley, CW2 xxxi 144; *ibid.*, *Research on Hadrian's Wall* (1961), 213-214; Duff, CW2 xxxix 327-329; P. Salway, *The Frontier People of Roman Britain* (1965), 101; Collingwood Bruce, *op. cit.* (1966), 209-211. The road system is discussed by R. L. Bellhouse in CW2 lxix 75-79.

filled with charcoal-laden soil and small stones. Both the post-pit and the area between the posts had been packed with a layer of clay and turves, forming the base of a rampart, 3 m. in width. This rampart presumably extended north and south of the post setting but no further trace of it could be found. Immediately to the south of the posts, however, was a thin skin of rammed cobbles (Fig. 3), laid upon a bed of white clay. Assuming that the four posts formed the northern tower of the West Gate, this cobbling is most plausibly interpreted as the surfacing for the

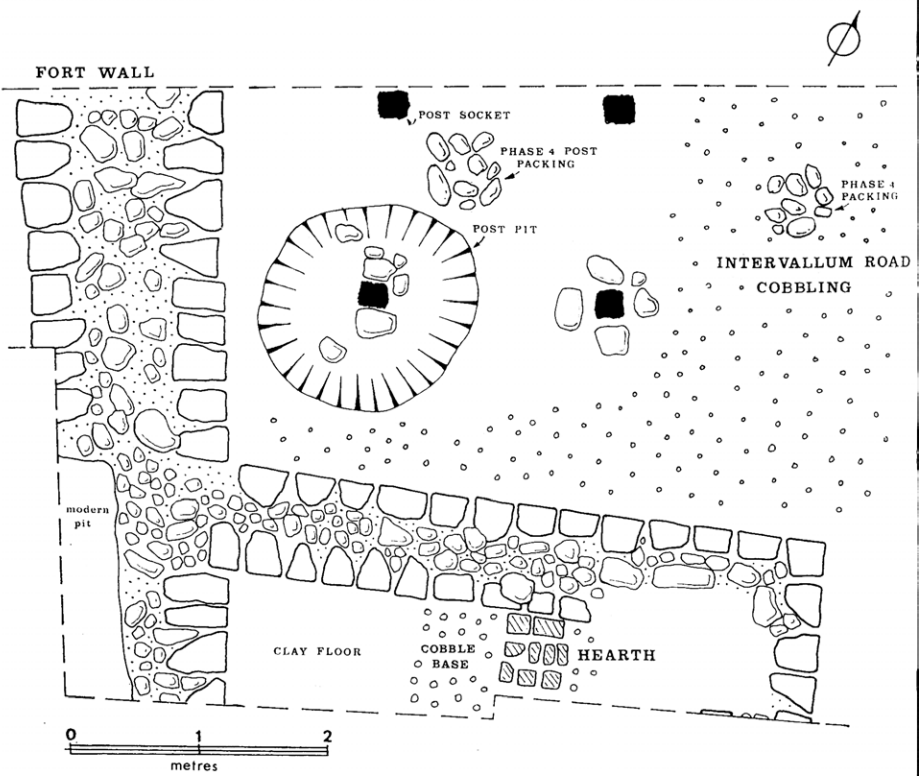

FIG. 3.—Detailed plan of the West Gate area.

Via Praetoria. A silver *denarius* of Hadrian, an issue of A.D. 119-121, was found just above this surface, beneath deposits of phases 2 and 3.

The cobbling was traced over 2 m. to the east where it ran beneath the later surfaces of the *intervallum* road. The removal of these later surfaces did reveal traces of what may have been the junction between the Via Praetoria and the earliest surface of the *intervallum* road but the evidence was far from clear. East of the *intervallum* road, however, there were some signs of contemporary timber buildings. One certain posthole, shown in Fig. 4, was identified and was associated with a thick spread of charcoal (Fig. 4, unit 15). There may well have been other postholes but the conditions under which this level was examined were too bad to draw firm conclusions. Nevertheless, it does seem quite clear that, as on other forts in the western sector of Hadrian's Wall,[7] the stone fort at Bowness was preceded by a turf and timber phase.

Phase 2.

Subsequently, the fort was rebuilt in stone. The footing for a massive fort wall was uncovered at the western end of the site (Figs. 2, 3; Plate II), where it measured some 1.40 m. in width. It was clearly seen to be cutting the clay and turf rampart. There were well-preserved sandstone facing-stones in this sector and a rubble-filled core, set in a stiff red clay.

Carefully bonded with the fort wall footings was the wall of the northern guard-chamber of the West Gate. Part of this guard-chamber had already been examined in 1930 by Professor Eric Birley,[8] but some of the chamber fill remained intact (Fig. 4). The wall itself was 80 cm. in width and was built of sandstone

[7] Best illustrated at Drumburgh (Collingwood Bruce, *op. cit.* (1966), 209-211).
[8] CW2 xxxi 143.

facing-stones with a rubble and clay core. The foundation trench, 30 cm. in depth, was filled with cobbles and red clay. Of note is the fact that the guard-chamber had not been built square on to the fort wall (Fig. 3); the marked divergence from the right angle may suggest that the guard-chamber was constructed before the fort wall was completed. The floor of the guard-chamber was laid with white clay, above which was a thin layer of occupation soil (Fig. 4, unit 16) which unfortunately yielded no datable finds. There was no trace of the layer of masons' chippings "at foundation level" recorded by Birley.[9]

It was probably in this period that the *intervallum* road was constructed in its most solid form (Fig. 4). A layer of large cobbles was laid over the white clay (and perhaps over the earliest *intervallum* road), and surfaced with a layer of rammed cobbles. The total depth of the foundation was nearly 30 cm. The road was slightly cambered and measured as much as 8 m. in width.

East of the *intervallum* road the ground was built up with a deposit of red clay (Fig. 4, unit 11) which, at the east end of the site, was covered by an extensive layer of large cobbles (Fig. 4, unit 10). The cobbles were surfaced with pebbles and fine gravel. Two walls, both of which had been demolished to their lowest footings, relate to this phase (Fig. 4, units 13, 14). The footings, made of cobbles set in red clay, were placed in shallow, narrow trenches, sited 3.45 m. apart. The more easterly of the two footings was located on the northern part of the site (Fig. 2) and it is clear that they formed part of a long rectangular building. The building is narrow for a barrack block but it is possible that footing 13, which was notably slight, may have formed only a central partition, and that

[9] CW2 xxxi 145.

BOWNESS on SOLWAY 1973 SECTIONS

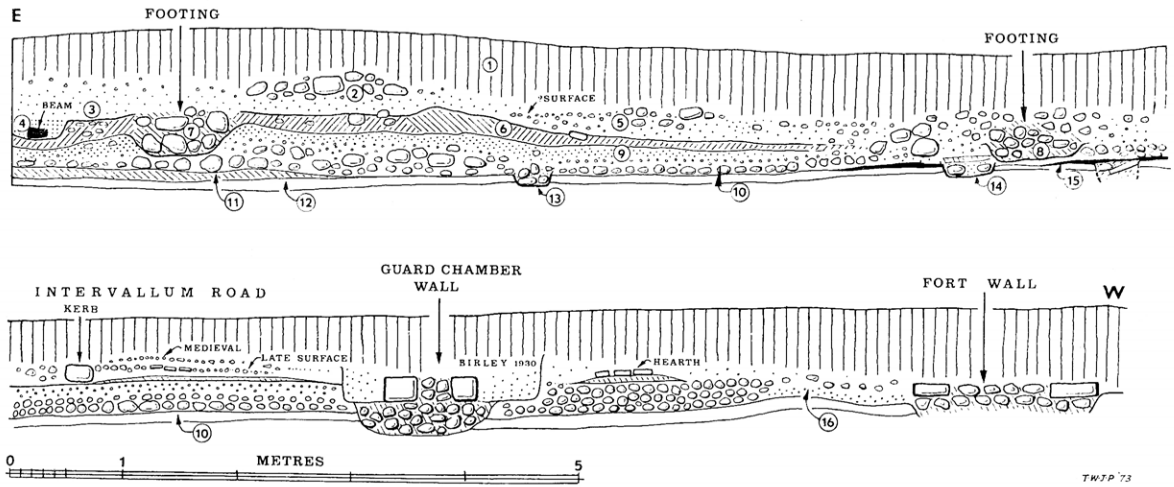

FIG. 4.—East-west sections through the fort.
Note: the two sections are not consecutive.

the east wall was not located. Alternatively, the building may have been a storehouse.

The dating evidence for this phase is decidedly deficient. Amongst the few stratified sherds, only one is approximately datable and is thought to belong to the period A.D. 120-140 (Fig. 6, no. 21). Thus, these excavations can throw little light on the dating of the rebuilding in stone of the turf phase structures in the western sector of the Hadrianic frontier.[10]

Phase 3.

A thin layer of occupation soil (Fig. 4, unit 9), notably lacking in finds, accumulated over the floor of the phase 2 buildings, before they were subsequently demolished. A new building was then constructed (Fig. 2) on a similar orientation but with the much greater width of 6.9 m. The walls survived only as badly robbed clay and cobble footings (Fig. 4, units 7, 8). The building was floored with an irregular layer of mixed orange and grey clay (Fig. 4, unit 6), in which was identified a timber partition slot, filled with charcoal (Fig. 2). The partition had been propped up at the west side of the building with a 12 cm. square post, set in a pit, 50 cm. in diameter, and filled with orange clay and cobbles. This partition, which presumably divided a *contubernium*, clearly suggests that the building was a barrack block.

Other alterations may also be assigned in general chronological terms to this phase. In the guard-chamber, a large cobble foundation was inserted by the north wall (Figs. 3, 4) for a hearth, which was surfaced with heavily burnt slabs of sandstone, set in a thin layer of red clay. Perhaps at the same time the *intervallum* road was reduced in width from 8 to 4 m., and was roughly resurfaced with flagging and cobbles,[11]

[10] Cf. J. P. Gillam and J. C. Mann, AA4 xlviii (1970), 15-16; G. Simpson, AA4 xlix (1971), 109-118.

[11] A further example of this late flagging has recently been revealed in the garden of Bowder House, by the South Gate, and has been photographed by the writer.

set on a layer of red clay. This late road surface was retained on the east side by a shoddily-built kerb, constructed with roughly-shaped stones.

The dating of this phase rests entirely upon the evidence of the coarse pottery. All the relevant material derives from the make-up for the floor of the barrack block and includes nos. 12, 14, 20, 25, 28, 30, 31 and 32 (cf. Figs. 5, 6). While most of these vessels are residual in this context, several sherds, detailed below, should probably be assigned to the 3rd century, and probably before A.D. 250. This date provides, therefore, an approximate *terminus ante quem* for the construction of the barrack block.

Phase 4.

Although both the pottery and the epigraphic evidence, discussed below, suggest that occupation of the fort continued down to the late 4th century, comparatively little structural or stratigraphic evidence survived for this period. It is possible that the reduction in the width of the *intervallum* road, referred to above, may relate to this phase, particularly if the civilian population was shifted from the *vicus* to within the fort, when there would presumably have been need for extra building space;[12] but decisive evidence is lacking. There was, however, some indication of late building at the east end of the phase 3 barrack block, where a timber beam had been laid in a shallow trench, running parallel with the barrack block wall (Fig. 4, unit 4). There was also some suggestion of a return westwards. It is quite certain that this beam was laid at a period later than the construction of the barrack block but evidence for its date and purpose was lacking. It may possibly have formed part of a lean-to, built up against the barrack block; certainly, construction in timber is consistent with evidence from

[12] CW2 lx 16.

other Hadrian's Wall forts in the late Roman period.[13] Alternatively, it could represent a building of post-Roman date, for in the area of the *intervallum* road there were structures of this date. The road surface itself had been covered with a further layer of rough cobbling and flagging, discernible in the top right hand corner of Plate II. Associated with this cobbling were two clusters of stones which are most plausibly explained as post-packings (Fig. 3). Several sherds of green glaze ware were found on the cobbled surface and two of these sherds joined with a larger fragment, belonging to a handled jug, found beneath the cobbling (Fig. 6, no. 33). The jug is of 13th century type. No earlier medieval sherds were found, which implies a long period of abandonment after the end of the 4th century and corroborates both the documentary evidence for Bowness (*vide infra*) and the results of previous excavations. Daniels had found that the earliest medieval material from outside the West Gate was of late 12th-century date and, moreover, had inferred that these settlers moved inside the area of the fort during the Scottish War of Independence[14] when, as Birley showed[15] and Mohamed corroborated,[16] at least one of the Roman fort ditches was recut. If the cobbled surface and postholes found in the present excavations relate to this phase, as seems likely, then, however, the occupation was either of limited duration or the associated layers were later ploughed off, for there was little late medieval/early modern pottery. It seems most probable that the main nucleus of the settlement shifted to the eastern and rather less exposed end of the knoll, while the western part reverted to pasture.

[13] E.g., Rudchester, Haltonchesters: AA5 i (1973), 82-83.
[14] CW2 lx 16.
[15] CW2 xxxi 142.
[16] *Art cit.*; medieval sherds were found in the "dark soil" filling the ditch.

The Samian.

A preliminary analysis of the samian was made by Mr H. K. Bowes. Of the 88 sherds, most derived from unstratified contexts and were in a very worn, abraded condition. The stratified groups yielded only a few scraps of samian and therefore provide little help with the dating of the early phases. Mr Bowes notes that the group as a whole is characteristically Hadrianic-Antonine and includes sherds in the styles of the Lezoux potters of Arcanus (*c.* A.D. 125-150), Quintilianus (*c.* A.D. 125-150), Austus (*c.* A.D. 125-150), and of the Medetus-Ranto group (*c.* A.D. 100-125). There were also two fragments of a Rheinzabern Dr. 30 of Antonine date. No stamps were found.

Key to the Units shown in Fig. 4.

1. Ploughsoil.
2. Rubble deriving from stone robbing.
3. Dark brown fill.
4. Beam slot with traces of wooden beam. Phase 4.
5. Cobble horizon above a pebbly dark brown silt.
6. Layer of mixed orange and grey clay. Phase 3.
7. Wall footing, phase 3.
8. Wall footing, phase 3.
9. Dark brown gravelly silt.
10. Make-up for phase 2 floor.
11. Red clay, phase 2.
12. White clay make-up, phase 1.
13. Wall trench, phase 2.
14. Wall trench, phase 2.
15. Charcoal spread, phase 1.
16. Dark brown silt on floor of guard-chamber, phase 2.

The Coarse Ware (Figs. 5, 6).

Only a small quantity of pottery was found and few pieces were stratified. A representative selection is illustrated here, including all the identifiable stratified pieces. I am indebted to Mr J. P. Gillam for suggesting

dates for these sherds.[17] The letters in parentheses are marked upon the sherd, together with the site code, BS 73, and identify the group assigned to each stratigraphic unit.

Fig. 5.

1. (AW) Mortarium in a cream-yellow fabric. Large red grits. Unstratified. A West Midlands type, resembling Gillam 285. Mid 3rd-early 4th century.
2. (AH) Mortarium in a hard brown fabric with a reddish-grey core. Black grits. Unstratified. 3rd-4th centuries.
3. (AW) Mortarium in a cream fabric, with very faint grooves on the rim. Unstratified. Early-mid 3rd century.
4. (AC) Mortarium in a smooth yellowish fabric. Black grits. Unit 4; phase 4. Antonine.
5. (AV) Mortarium in a whitish fabric. Multi-coloured grits. Robber trench fill. A West Midlands type, 3rd century.
6. (AD) Dish in a black burnished fabric. Chamfered foot. Unit 3. A.D. 130-160.
7. (AA) Dish with a light grey core and soft light grey burnished surfaces. Groove below rim. Unstratified.
8. (AB) Dish in a black burnished fabric. Unstratified. Mr R. A. H. Farrar suggests that this dish, with its distinctive groove just above the base, may represent an import from south-west Britain. Hadrianic-Antonine.
9. (AD) Dish in a gritty dark grey burnished fabric. Unit 3. A.D. 130-160.
10. (AA) Dish in a soft grey burnished fabric. Unstratified. Hadrianic-Antonine.
11. (AC) Dish in a black burnished fabric. Very lightly drawn lattice decoration. Unit 4; phase 4. 3rd century.
12. (AE) Dish in a reddish-grey burnished fabric. Unit 6; phase 3. Hadrianic-Antonine.
13. (AB) Flagon in a gritty orange fabric with a single three-rib handle. Unstratified. A.D. 120-160.

[17] For the typology, cf. J. P. Gillam, *Types of Roman Coarse Pottery Vessels in Northern Britain* (3rd edition, 1970). Mr Gillam notes that all the black burnished wares belong to category 1.

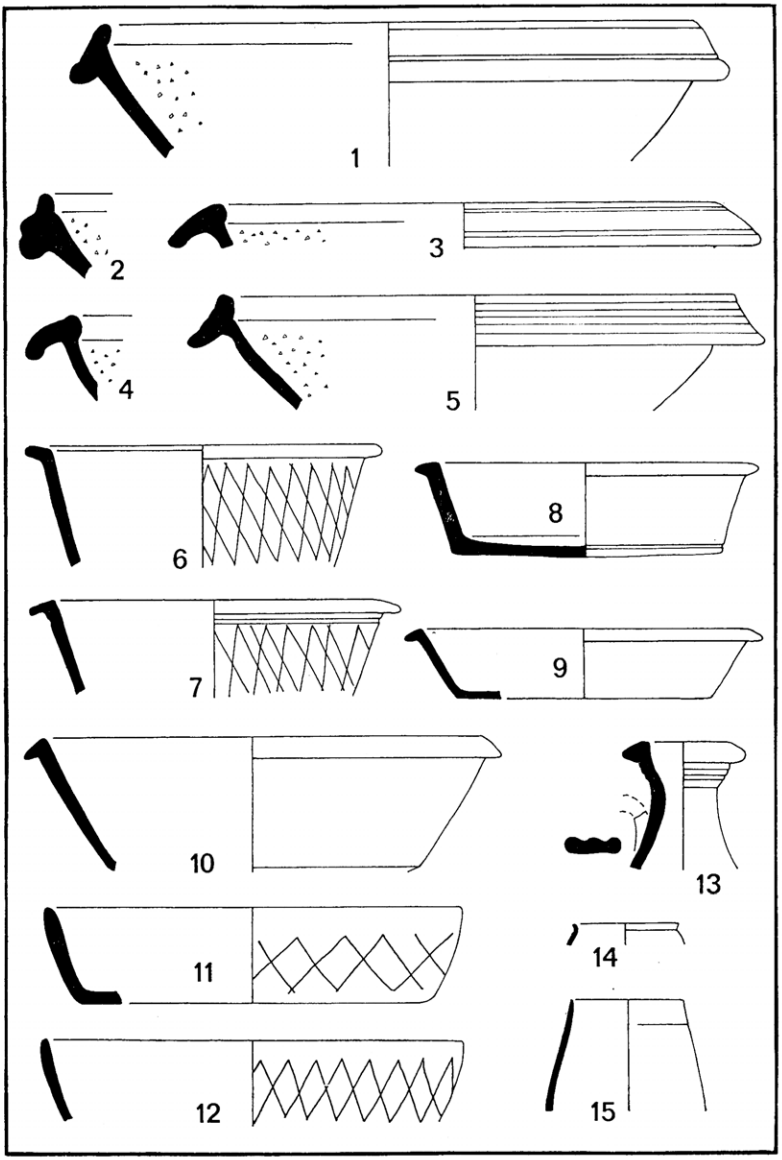

FIG. 5.—Coarse pottery (Scale 1:4).

14. (AI) Beaker rim in an orange fabric with a lustrous orange colour-coat. Probably rough-cast. Phase 3. Hadrianic-Antonine.

15. (AC) Beaker in a white-cream fabric with a dark brown colour-coat. Unit 5; phase 4. Early 3rd century.

Fig. 6.

16. (AF) Flanged bowl in a soft smooth light grey fabric. Unstratified. Probably Crambeck Ware. Cf. Gillam 315 for the general type. A.D. 340-380.

17. (AF) Flanged dish in a gritty orange fabric. Unstratified. Imitation Drag. 38.

18. (AA) Jar in a grey burnished fabric. Unstratified. Hadrianic-Antonine.

19. (AB) Jar in a gritty black fabric. Unstratified. Hadrianic-Antonine.

20. (AU) Jar in a gritty black fabric. Phase 3. Hadrianic.

21. (BB) Jar in a black burnished fabric. Unit 10; phase 2. A.D. 120-140.

22. (AW) Jar in a gritty black burnished fabric. Unstratified. Late 2nd century.

23. (AA) Jar in a light grey burnished fabric. Unstratified. Late 2nd century.

24. (AA) Jar in a soft light grey fabric. Unstratified. Late 2nd century.

25. (AI) Jar in a black burnished fabric. Phase 3. 3rd century.

26. (AC) Jar in a black burnished fabric. Unit 4; phase 4.

27. (AB) Jar in a light grey burnished fabric. Unstratified. Hadrianic.

28. (AI) Jar in a black burnished fabric. Phase 3. Hadrianic.

29. (AA) Jar in a black burnished fabric. Unstratified. Late 3rd century.

30. (AE) Jar in a black burnished fabric. Unit 6; phase 3. Close to Gillam 145. First half 3rd century.

31. (AE) Jar in a grey burnished fabric. Unit 6; phase 3. Cf. Gillam 142. Later 2nd-early 3rd centuries.

32. (AI) Jar in a grey burnished fabric. Phase 3.

33. (AA-AJ) Jug in a light grey fabric with a thickish green glaze on the exterior. Some sherds unstratified but joining with other sherds found beneath the phase 4 cobbling on the *intervallum* road. 13th century.

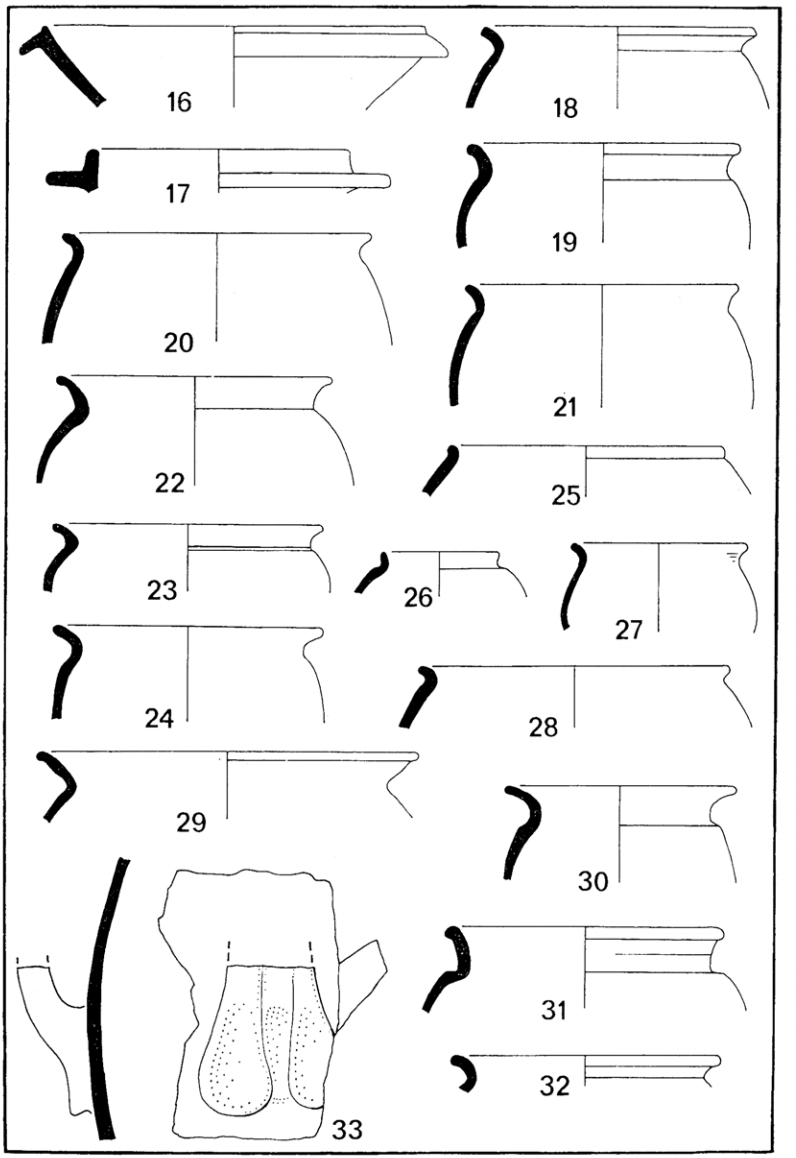

FIG. 6.— Coarse pottery (Scale 1:4).

The Coins

(D. C. A. Shotter).

Two coins were found in the course of the excavation:

1. Silver *Denarius* of Hadrian (overlying phase 1 road).
   Obv: Bust of Hadrian, laureate, right; drapery on left shoulder only.
   IMP CAESAR TRAIAN HADRIANVS AVG
   Rev: Pax standing left, holding branch and sceptre.
   P M TR P COS III

The first main series of the Hadrianic coinage closed in 122, and is characterised by the obverse legend of the form shown here. Hadrian's third consulship fell in 119, which puts this coin in the period 119-122. Further development of the obverse bust during the early period suggests that this particular coin should be placed in the years 119-121.

The gold and silver coinage of the period contains two main reverse themes — deities and personifications; it is probable that the *Pax* (sometimes *Pax Victrix*) and *Victoria* issues refer to a victory won in Britain, which preceded the initiation of Hadrian's Wall, and which should perhaps be linked with the statement by Hadrian's biographer, Spartianus, that on the emperor's accession "the Britons could no longer be held". (SHA, *Hadrianus* 5, 2.)

2. Bronze *Sestertius* of Hadrian (unstratified).

This coin is in a badly worn condition, and its legend is barely legible. On the obverse, it bears the laureate head of Hadrian, facing right. The head is characterised by the exceptional length of the neck. The obverse legend will have read HADRIANVS AVGVSTVS P P. On the reverse is the figure of *Hilaritas* facing left, carrying palm-leaf and cornucopiae, and flanked by the figures of a boy (right) and a girl (left). COS III

can be faintly made out in the exergue, and S C left and right in the field. The full reverse legend will have read HILARITAS P R COS III S C.

Hadrian received the title P(ater) P(atriae) in 128, and this issue of coins is placed in the period 128-132.

Other Roman coins from Bowness.

Bowness-on-Solway has not a record of a large number of coins; Birley[18] records sixteen, of which the latest is assigned to Crispina, the wife of Commodus. A small hoard of "fifteen or more"[19] appears to have been recovered in the late 16th or early 17th centuries, lying underneath the re-used inscription, *RIB* 2060 (*vide infra*). This hoard contained a coin of the DIVA AVGVSTA FAVSTINA / CONSECRATIO issue of the years following 141. The coin of Crispina (mentioned above) was recovered by Birley in topsoil in the area of the northern guard-chamber of the West Gate during his 1930 excavation.[20]

The Small Finds (Fig. 7)

(Roger Miket)

1. Iron spearhead (max. surviving length 164 mm., max. surviving width of blade 49 mm.). Unit 6, phase 3. Badly corroded socketed spearhead. An unusual feature is the very strongly pronounced raised central rib along the length of the blade on either side.
2. Iron sickle (max. surviving length 102 mm., width of blade 31 mm., ave. thickness 4 mm.). Unit 4, phase 3. Badly corroded and incomplete, the surviving blade is in two fragments. It takes the form of a gently curving arc, the cutting edge being

18 E. Birley, *Research of Hadrian's Wall* (1961), 259.
19 Recorded by Bainbrigg: cf. CW2 xi 352.
20 CW2 xxxi 145.

on the inside, which leads to a now short and stubby tang.

Of the two initial possibilities, that the blade was either one half of a pair of shears (*forpex*), or part of a sickle (*falx*), the wide rib along the back of the blade is inconsistent with a function where two opposed curved blades must intersect. On this alone the latter interpretation would appear to be the more likely, being further strengthened by the appearance of the raised spine on some forms of *falx messoria*. (K. D. White, *Agricultural Implements of the Roman World*, 1967, p. 80, figs. 53 & 54.)

3. Bronze "stud" (max. surviving diameter 27 mm., height 7 m., thickness 1 mm., hole diameter 9 mm.). Unstratified. Small hemispherical cup pierced at the apex with a large hole. Probably too large to be accounted for as simply to take a rivet or nail for attachment, it may indicate its junction with an additional piece, or have held an inset. The flange around the outer rim is very fragmentary, giving no indication of its original extent, and the only element of decoration is a single score line running around the stud at its mid-height. While this may possibly be no more than a decorative stud of now uncertain purpose, the similarity which this piece bears to the type of eye with glass inset found on some bronze busts is sufficiently marked to consider this as a possibility.

4. Bronze ? washer (max. diameter 39 mm., thickness 1.5 mm.). Unit 9, phase 2. Large bronze disc with square central piercing. Probably a washer.

5. Disc brooch (max. diameter 28 mm.). Unit 5, phase 4. Incomplete disc brooch. Decorated in blue enamel, this example retains fragmentary traces

of the lobes which are a feature of the 2nd and 3rd century examples. (R. G. Collingwood and I A. Richmond, *The Archaeology of Roman Britain*, 1969, p. 299.)

6. Bronze ring (max. diameter 31 mm., thickness 2 mm.). Unstratified. Small bronze ring fashioned from thin rod, circular in section. One similar example (max. diameter 25 mm., thickness 1.7 mm.), also unstratified.

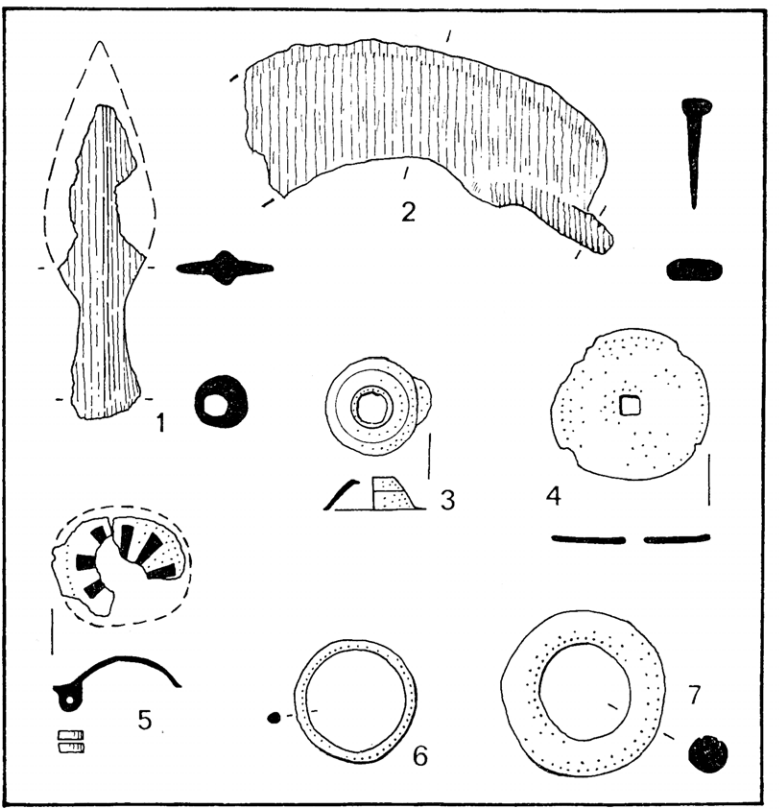

FIG. 7.—Small finds of iron (1, 2) and bronze (3-7).
All 1:2 except no. 1 (1:4).

7. Bronze ring (max. diameter 43 mm., thickness 11 mm.). Unit 6, phase 3. Heavy bronze annular ring, circular in section and decorated with two parallel score lines around the outer circumference.

Not Illustrated:

8. Cylindrical bronze object (diameter 17 mm., thickness 11 mm., diameter of bore 6 mm.). Unstratified. Small cylindrical bronze object, perforated through its width by a large circular bore. The upper face is decorated with traces of red enamel, albeit now too ephemeral to reconstruct the pattern. Function unknown.

9. Harness mount (max. width 34 mm., thickness 2 mm.). Found in the garden of Bowder House, by the South Gate. Bronze openwork mount in the form of a pendant triangle, with a curved expanded base. The round knobbed terminal at the head gives no clue as to how this piece was attached although it is conceivable that a strap may have passed through the central piercing. Probably from a harness mount as similar decorative pieces occur on the harness from Celles-Le-Wareinwe, Liège, in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Historie, Brussels.

10. 49 nails, mostly unbent.

The Inscriptions

(D. C. A. Shotter).

No formal inscriptions were found in the excavations, although amongst the fallen masonry (unit 5) to the west of the barrack block wall of phase 3 was a dressed stone scored with three parallel lines (Plate III). The significance of this is not clear unless it conceals the

enumeration of either the garrison cohort or a century of it. Alternatively, it might represent practice chiselling.

It is appropriate at this stage to provide a brief review of the epigraphic evidence for Bowness-on-Solway. Its Roman name, MAIA, is recorded on the Rudge Cup, the Amiens Skillet, and in the Ravenna Cosmography, although no mention is apparently made in the Notitia. Evidence for the garrison is sparse, although *RIB* 2057 makes it clear that in the mid-3rd century it was a cohort; the size of the fort, some 7 acres, suggests that this cohort was milliary, or that more than one unit was quartered in it, whilst the presence amongst the small finds of the 1973 excavation of some apparent items of horse equipment suggests further that the unit may have been a *cohors equitata*. Birley[21] suggested that there may have been more than a milliary cohort in the fort, and inclined to the view that part of Coh. II Lingonum (placed in the Notitia at Drumburgh — if CONGAVATA be the correct name for that site) may have been at Bowness, since Drumburgh (at two acres) is on the small side even for a quingenary cohort. A further possibility is that a unit of irregulars may have been stationed at Bowness, for the top of an altar, now to be seen in Port Carlisle (*RIB* 2055) carries the inscription, MATRI / BVS SVIS / MILITES; the use of MILITES would suggest irregulars,[22] and it is at least possible that the stone derives from Bowness.

The epigraphic collection is not otherwise large or particularly informative, and some of it presents major difficulties of interpretation. The inscriptions attributed to Bowness are published as *RIB* 2056-2061; of these *RIB* 2056 in fact comes from Kirkbride, four miles to the south, and should be attributed to that site. Of the

21 E. Birley, *Research on Hadrian's Wall* (1961), 211.
22 Cf. *RIB* 601 (from Lancaster).

rest, 2057 and 2058 are altars, 2059 a metrical dedication, and 2060 and 2061 building inscriptions.

The altars (2057 and 2058) were both dedicated by one Sulpicius Secundianus, who is described as TRIB(unus) COH(ortis). One of them is dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus; on the other the dedication is missing. The former is still extant, although in a badly weathered state, built into a wall of Bowness House Farm in the main east-west street, whilst the latter was recorded in 1871 as having been built into a cattle-shed at Herd Hill (less than a mile to the west of Bowness), but is now apparently lost. The date of both is established from the formula PRO SALVTE DD NN GALLI ET VOLVSIANI AVGG — i.e. 251-253. The quality of the lettering is poor, and its chief significance, as noted above, lies in the fact that it establishes the nature of the garrison.

The metrical dedication (*RIB* 2059) was found around 1790 to the south of the fort, and is now in Carlisle Museum. It records the dedication of a shrine to the Mother Goddesses by one Antonianus — (the name is plausibly restored on metrical grounds); he undertakes that if a project of his proves successful he will rewrite the inscription in gold lettering. The significance of this stone is twofold; the fact that it is written in verse suggests a certain degree of education on the part of the dedicator, particularly if, as has been suggested, it is modelled on Virgil.[23] Secondly, it is evidently a merchant's or a business-man's dedication, which indicates the presence of a *vicus*, which presumably flanked the fort's southern access road.

Finally, the building-stones; one (*RIB* 2061) reads LEGIO VI V(ictrix) P(ia) F(idelis) F(ecit), and was found in 1739. It is now in the National Museum of Antiquities at Edinburgh. The legion received its title

[23] *Eclogues*, vii 35-36.

Pia Fidelis from Domitian in 89 as a reward for its loyalty to him during Antonius Saturninus' rebellion on the Rhine in that year. The stone possibly refers to the replacement of the earlier turf-and-timber fort in stone in the mid-2nd century.

The other building-inscription (*RIB* 2060) is extremely difficult to interpret, because of the insecurity of the text, which apparently rests on an interpretation of an imperfect record. It was found around 1600, and consisted of two slabs apparently re-used in a late construction, and sealing a hoard of about fifteen coins, one of which was the DIVA AVGVSTA FAVSTINA / CONSECRATIO issue. The text is in two parts, and is printed as follows — MARC AVRELLIVS / IMPERA TRIVMPH / PERSA and MARC AVREL / PHILO. There is little hope of restoring the text of what was evidently an ornate and imposing inscription,[24] but attempts have been made to establish the imperial names it contains. R. P. Wright[25] argues that if PERSA conceals the title PERSICVS and if a pair of imperial personages is involved, then possible candidates are Numerian and Carinus (283-284) or, more likely, Diocletian and Maximian (286-305). The re-use of the stone would then probably date to the post-369 period.

More attractive, however, is Birley's suggestion that Caracalla is intended,[26] and here one should recall the number of building inscriptions from the Wall and its hinterland which commemorate Caracalla, Elagabalus or Severus Alexander; the coupling of M. Aurelius Antoninus Elagabalus and M. Aurelius Alexander (on *RIB* 1465 from Chesters) perhaps provides a parallel and suitable pair of imperial personages to assign to this inscription from Bowness-on-Solway.

[24] Cf. Bainbrigg's description: CW2 xi 352.
[25] Note in *RIB*.
[26] E. Birley, *Research on Hadrian's Wall* (1961), 211.

Bowness-on-Solway : The Documentary Sources

(J. A. Tuck).

The earliest documentary reference to the place is 1225, in the Holm Cultram Abbey Cartulary.[27] The name itself is Norse (Bogi-ness, rounded or bow-shaped headland),[28] but this need not imply settlement there in Norse times (i.e. before *c.* 1042): the name could have been given to mark a point on the Solway by men sailing up and down the estuary. After the abandonment of the Roman fort there is of course the possibility that a British population continued to inhabit the site, and the existence of a ford across the Solway from Bowness was perhaps an incentive to do so; but the military importance of the site was diminished with the departure of the Romans, for both the successor-state of Rheged and the Anglian kingdom of Northumbria controlled both sides of the estuary.[29] There was little to attract Anglian settlers to that part of Cumberland: there are few Anglian place-names in the area, and Anglian settlers in Cumberland went mainly to the good agricultural land of the Eden and Irthing valleys and the coastal plain.[30] Although Bowness itself stands on an island of clay, there was little in the surrounding soils — mainly peat inland and alluvium around the estuary shore — to attract new settlers.[31] It would be understandable if the site remained empty from the departure of the Romans through British, Anglian and Norse times: the place-name does not prove that the Norse established a settlement there.

In 1092 William II brought "The Land of Carlisle"

27 F. Grainger & W. G. Collingwood, *The Register and Records of Holm Cultram* (C. & W. Record Series, vol. VII, 1929), 9.

28 *The Place-Names of Cumberland* (E.P.N.S., vol. XX. Cambridge, 1950), part I, 123.

29 P. Hunter Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1962), 41-42, 46-47.

30 *Place-Names of Cumberland,* part III, pp. xxi-xxii.

31 T. H. Bainbridge, "The Soils of Cumbria : A Preliminary Study", *Empire Journal of Experimental Agriculture,* vol. VII (1939), 175-183.

under the direct authority of the English crown, and Ranulf Meschin, the new Norman lord of the Land of Carlisle, established the Barony of Burgh, primarily to defend what was now once again a frontier with a potentially hostile power. He granted the Barony to one of his followers, Robert de Trivers, and Bowness, together with all the land lying east of the Wampool, formed part of the barony.[32] But it was subinfeudated early, to one Gamel le Brun, also known as de la Feritate — indeed that is about all that is known of him.[33] This early subinfeudation is unfortunate, because it means that we virtually lose touch with the history of Bowness for the rest of the middle ages. Very little is known of the family: it seems to have died out in the 15th century, and Bowness was reintegrated then with the manor of Burgh itself, which passed to the Dacres in 1342, to the Howards Dukes of Norfolk in 1570, and then by sale to the Lowthers in 1689.[34] No medieval documents relating either to the Barony or to Bowness itself survive in the Carlisle Record Office.

However, there is 12th-century work in the church at Bowness (N. and S. doorways, Font, one of the N. windows of the chancel), and although the le Brun family had their chief seat at Drumburgh there is no doubt that there was a settlement at Bowness from *c.* 1100 onwards. Anything that can be said about the settlement is speculative. It must have been of some strategic significance throughout the middle ages, for it commanded the S. end of the ford, and after *c.* 1300, when Anglo-Scottish hostility became virtually permanent, its military importance probably increased still further. Since it stands on an island of clay, some

32 *VCH Cumberland* i (London, 1901), 305.
33 J. Nicolson & R. Burn, *The History and Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland*, vol. II (London, 1777), 212-213.
34 *Ibid.*, pp. 213, 218-219; some scattered information about the Le Brun family may be found in *The Register and Records of Holm Cultram, passim.*

very limited arable farming is possible in the immediate neighbourhood of the settlement, but it is likely that stock-raising and fishing were more important activities than arable farming; there was perhaps some salt-making by evaporation, and, no doubt, some pillaging on the opposite shore, especially in the 14th and 15th centuries.

Discussion.

It would be unwise to place too much reliance upon the conclusions reached from so small-scale an excavation, undertaken under such unsuitable conditions. Nevertheless, certain results do emerge which deserve emphasis. It now seems quite clear that at Bowness there was a Hadrianic timber-built fort with turf and clay ramparts. This was replaced by a stone fort which, if the superimposition of gates is significant, was probably of similar dimensions. The date of this rebuild was not closely established although there is nothing which contradicts a late Hadrianic date; but further evidence is needed. The buildings within the small area of the fort that was sampled underwent various changes, the principal feature being a major rebuild, probably in the first half of the 3rd century. This recalls a building inscription from Bowness, *RIB* 2060, for which Birley has proposed a Caracallan date;[35] if Birley's dating is right, then this inscription belongs to a large series which record rebuilding and reconstruction in both the frontier zone and the hinterland to the south in the first quarter of the 3rd century.[36] However, it is perhaps worth stressing that the Bowness excavations yielded no evidence to show that the rebuilding followed upon any catastrophe: levels indicating destruction by fire were completely absent from this part of the fort, nor

[35] Birley, *Research on Hadrian's Wall* (1961), 211.
[36] I. A. Richmond, *Roman Archaeology and Art* (1969), 31.

was there an unusually high proportion of burnt artifacts which might indicate a conflagration. On the evidence of this excavation the fort at Bowness seems to have had an uneventful history.

The identity and character of the garrison at Bowness is presently unknown but there are some slight hints among the small finds that it may have held at one time a *cohors equitata*. This may be inferred from the presence of a harness mount from the garden of Bowder House, by the site of the South Gate, and a number of bronze rings which recall harness attachments. The inference is a tenuous one and reflects our sparse understanding of the site: indeed, it is sad to record that, of the four excavations to have taken place on the site, three have been rescue projects in advance of building and now all too little open land is available for future work. It is to be hoped that the broad framework for the history of the site, described in this paper, will soon be refined by further excavation on what was one of the major forts in the frontier system of Roman Britain.

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