ART. VI. – An Excavation on the Roman Fort at Stanwix, Carlisle.
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THIS report has been prepared in accordance with the publication policy laid down by English Heritage Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission. The volume text and figures represent a summary of the main findings; these are supported by detail which appears in microfiche at the end of the volume. Those parts of the report which appear on fiche are indicated in the list of contents below and are indicated in the text by an asterisk. (Microfiche readers are available for use, upon request, at main libraries.)

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Fig. 2. - General location map.
AN EXCAVATION ON THE ROMAN FORT AT STANWIX, CARLISLE

Introduction

In February 1984 the owners of the Cumbria Park Hotel, Stanwix (NY 400574), notified Carlisle Archaeological Unit that masonry had been uncovered during work at the rear of their property on Scotland Road, (Fig. 1*). On investigation it soon became apparent that a previously unsuspected north curtain wall, rampart and interval tower of the fort were present. The owners of the hotel readily gave permission for an excavation, and the work was carried out in March and April 1984, on behalf of the owners, English Heritage and Carlisle City Council. A machine was used to remove most of the recent soil and some of the rampart. On completion of the excavation two short lengths of the curtain wall were retained on display, while the rest was reburied in a largely undamaged condition.

The Fort

The west, south and east defences of the fort and a little of the internal layout were established by work carried out up to 1940 (Richmond and Simpson 1941). It was assumed that Hadrian’s Wall, uncovered in Stanwix school yard in 1932 (Simpson and Hogg, 1935), formed the north wall of the fort. Figure 2 shows the location of the 1984 site in relation to the earlier excavations and also includes a stretch of Wall and ditch terminal, recorded in 1961 (Hogg, unpublished), which suggests the position of the Carlisle-Netherby road.

Description of the Excavation

No old ground surface was identified and the unweathered appearance of the natural subsoil suggested that the area had been terraced at some stage. Consequently there was no evidence of ploughing or other pre-military activity of the type found in 1976 at Tarraby Lane (Smith 1978), some 500 metres to the east.

The Ditches

A ditch, (A134, Figs. 3, 4*, 7a), of which only a small area was accessible for excavation, ran along the south edge of the site. It was traced for a distance of at least 16 m, but its width and depth were not established. A134 underlay the rampart and the footings of the interval tower’s south wall. A substantial proportion of the upper fill was brown-grey sandy silt similar to the rampart itself. Lower down the fills were waterlogged, but the excavation barely impinged on them.

Two portions of a smaller ditch, (A40/132, Figs. 3, 5*, 8a), situated 5·9 m north of A134 were also examined. In the east trench the ditch, (A40), was 1·05 m deep by 2·4 m wide. The disposition of the fills suggested that the upper part of the ditch may have
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Fig. 3. — Site plan.
been truncated in antiquity, and its broad, flat base was probably due to weathering rather than design. The fill included silts mixed with clay weathered from the side, which accumulated while the ditch was in use. These were overlaid by a dump of large yellow sandstone blocks, (A10), in a layer of clayey-grit (A9, 35), which formed a surface almost flush with the top of the ditch. At the west end of the site the area of ditch examined was sufficient to confirm the continuous nature of the upper fill, (A9, 10, 35 and 131), and to determine the ditch's alignment.

The third ditch (A8, Figs. 3, 6*, 8a) investigated was approximately 3.5 m north of A40 and again two separate trenches were excavated. In the hand-excavated east trench, (Fig. 6*), only the south side of the ditch was observed in section. The lowest fill, (A6), was waterlogged, while the greater part of the upper fill appeared to consist of gradual silting. A machine trench further west pinpointed the centre of the ditch. The size of the ditch was not established but may have been about 9 m wide by 3 m deep.

The Curtain Wall and Rampart

A 24 m length of curtain wall, (Figs. 3, 8a) aligned north-east, south-west was revealed, although a combination of robbing, and (to a lesser extent) machine disturbance had removed much of the stone. Overlying the clay and cobble foundations, the footings,
PLATE 2. — General view of curtain wall and tower looking north.
Fig. 7a-b. - Tower plans.
which included re-used stone, were 2.10-2.13 m wide to the east of the interval tower, and 1.78-1.89 m wide to the west. The full width of the second chamfered course which formed a plinth and which was also narrower to the west, only survived intact at one point, (A15, Fig. 3), where it was 1.73 m wide. It consisted of coursed rubble (Hill, 1981), although the north face was more carefully dressed and was offset from the basal course of yellow sandstone flags. Adjacent to the curtain wall was the rampart.

The rampart consisted of an earth bank at least 3.5 m wide at the base, which overlay the footings of the curtain wall and which turned to meet the rear corners of the interval tower. It was constructionally contemporary with the curtain wall. A patchy paved surface occupied the space behind the interval tower from which the body of the rampart was absent. The bottom of the rampart contained a limited amount of building debris, stones, tile and crushed sandstone, either associated with the demolition of earlier structures or discarded during the construction of the curtain wall and interval tower.

*The Interval Tower: Construction (Fig. 7a)*

The interval tower lay midway along the excavated stretch of curtain wall. It too had clay and stone foundations, but these were only visible where the footings of the east side wall had been robbed. The alignment of the robbed east wall footings deviated slightly from the underlying foundation, (A117), suggesting a minor alteration in plan or a constructional error. The footings of the back-wall, (A81.1-81.16), were broader, (1.1-1.2 m), than those of the side-walls, (0.8-1 m), possibly because the former overlay unconsolidated ditch fill. The tower walls were 0.8 m wide at the second course, and the profiles of the robber trenches A64 and A51, (Fig. 7b, 18*), show that the third course was offset internally by 3.4 cm from the second course. Marking-out lines scored
Fig. 8(a) – Ditches-rampart section, (b) – Tower robbing section.
on to one of the footing stones, (A81.16), indicated the position of the robbed external corner of the walls A68 and A80. Because the second course of the north and east walls of the tower was completely robbed out, it is only possible to give minimum internal dimensions based on the surviving footings. These were 2.60 m, (N-S), by 3.35 m, (E-W), which gives a minimum area of 8.71 m² at the base of the second course.

The Interval Tower: Doorway

Evidence of an entrance through the back-wall of the tower was provided by an untooled or worn area 1 m wide, which crossed the footing stones A81.1 and A81.4, (Fig. 7a, 10*). The surface of this area contrasted with that of the adjacent footing stones, which were deeply scored to provide a key for the mortar bonding the second course. Additional evidence for the doorway existed outside the tower where a band of sandstone and cobbles, (A57 Fig. 7a), suggested a path leading up to the door.

The Interval Tower: Occupation (Fig. 7, 8b, 11-16*)

Within the interval tower the primary layer was a subfloor of crushed yellow sandstone, (A102), probably constructional debris, although it may not have been manufactured in its present location. This was overlaid by trampled floors, the surfaces of which, not unnaturally, were higher around the perimeter of the room than in the centre. There was an area of burnt sand against the back-wall surrounded by charcoal-stained sandy silt. In the angle between the walls A68 and A80, there was an area of paving, (A79, Fig. 14), 1.8 m by 0.9 m, which was succeeded by a similar feature (A71), occupying a slightly different area. Neither of these paved areas appeared to be a fragment of a more extensive floor, so it is probable that they provided the base for a ladder or stairway giving access to the upper stories. Several small sherds of intrusive medieval pottery were present in the upper layers of the interval tower.

The other features

Little of archaeological significance, (with the exception of the ditches described above) survived in the area to the north of the curtain wall. Small spreads of cobbles and soily gravel, which post-dated the construction of the wall, hinted at the presence of a surface on the berm. There was also a drain, (A126), consisting of two parallel rows of small yellow sandstone blocks lying perpendicular to the north face of the curtain wall. A126 post-dated the construction of the curtain wall and the back-fill of the small ditch A40/132, but there was insufficient evidence to date it more closely.

Behind the interval tower, to the south there was an oven-like feature, (Fig. 8b), which had an ambiguous stratigraphic relationship with the robbing of the tower’s back-wall. It consisted of a foundation pit 0.45 m deep filled with alternate layers of clay and stone (A54). This was a standard Roman technique for constructing foundations, and suggests a Roman, rather than a post-Roman, date for the feature. An inward-facing arc of five small, red sandstone blocks (A49), was set on top of the foundation, adjacent to which was a small patch of burnt clay, perhaps relating to the use of the oven. It is possible that this feature post-dated the destruction of the interval tower’s back-wall, but conclusive evidence was absent.

It is impossible to comment on the relative dating of the robbing of the interval tower
walls and the curtain wall, except to say that the robbing could have been piecemeal, parts of it occurring at any date up to the present day.

The soil layers which overlay the curtain wall, rampart, interval tower and ditch fills, were uninformative, containing virtually no finds or significant features.

The modern features were not examined.

The Finds by T. G. Padley

(A full catalogue of the finds appears on microfiche (pages 29-46). The numbers in brackets in the summary below are the catalogue numbers.)

Summary

The Roman finds are mostly common utilitarian items which do not add to the interpretation of the site. The iron nails and hobnails (12-31), the lead pot-mends (7, 8), the few fragments of bottle and window glass (66-70), the small lumps of coal and slag (59-65) are not surprising in their contexts.

The only find which could be regarded as a luxury object is the fragment of a copper-alloy finger ring (1) which was undecorated and of unusual form. One lead object (6) is interesting – it may have been a weight or plumb-bob.

The most significant find is a fragment of a stamp (74) on brick which matches closely the Ninth Legion stamp found at Scalesceugh in 1921 (Wright 1978, type 5b). It is described more fully below. There are also four fragmentary graffiti on pottery (75-8), all probably names.

None of the stratified finds can be dated closely enough to help in dating the site.

In addition there were a few post-medieval and undatable finds including a button (4) and a ring (5) of copper-alloy and three pieces of lead window came (9).

The Brick Stamp (Fig. 20) by I. D. Caruana

Brick with the corner of an impressed stamp. Part of one letter survives, showing a down stroke and apparently the top bar of an E or F. As the bar is very short and neither

![fig_20.png](attachment:fig_20.png)

E or F suggest a plausible reading for the stamp it is more likely that the letter in question is an L and the stamp should be read as L[EG . . .

Min. Ht. 24 mm.
A54 CO1. Period 3a. Cat. No. 74

This form of the L with a short horizontal bar at the top is not common. It does not occur on Sixth Legion stamps (Wright 1976). On stamps of the Second and Twentieth Legions it occurs in forms closer to a true serif, as very crude bars and in the same form
as the Stanwix tile but on retrograde dies (Nash-Williams 1932, 55 Types 12-17; Grimes 1930, 211, Fig. 59). None is the same die as on the Stanwix tile. The most likely candidate for the stamp is Type 5 of the Ninth Legion stamps (Wright 1978, 380). This die is also local to the Carlisle area and possibly in use at Scalesceugh (CW1, xii, 280; CW2, xxii, 456). The stamp has also been found in excavations at Annetwell St. (unpublished). In addition to the letter form there is, in the Scalesceugh stamp, a small round extension of the frame at the top left corner which is matched on the Stanwix fragment.

This is the second tile stamp recorded from Stanwix. The other was a Twentieth Legion stamp found on the river bank but probably out of the river (JRS XLIV, 1954, 109, No. 32; Carlisle Museum Acc. 24-1953). The stamp itself must have been in use before the Legion’s departure from Britain under Trajan. Prior to its deposition in the foundation of the oven, the brick may have been used in either the enlarged fort of the Ala Petriana or, less likely, the primary Wall fort. While the brick itself may have been re-used from a demolished building or even ‘in stock’ it provides a link with the supply of building material at Carlisle (Luguvalium) and Scalesceugh where, to date, this Ninth Legion die stamp has been found.

The Samian Ware By B. M. Dickinson

Summary

With the exception of three South Gaulish sherds, all the Samian in this assemblage comes from the Central Gaulish factories of Les Martres-de-Veyre and Lezoux.

Les Martres ware is uncommon on Hadrian’s Wall, and the proportion on this site seems rather higher than normal. Most of the pieces involved have no closely datable features, though their fabrics and glazes seem to be Trajanic, on the whole. The one stamped dish, by Albus iii, is clearly Hadrianic, however.

About half the Lezoux ware is Hadrianic and the rest is Antonine. Most of the plain ware cannot be closely dated, but there are two decorated bowls in the style of Cinnamus ii which will not be earlier than c. A.D. 150, and the only Samian mortarium present (form 43) is certainly late-Antonine.

This small group of Samian provides no clear evidence of occupation in the early-Antonine period.

The Ceramic Finds by J. Taylor, incorporating a report on the Samian ware by B. M. Dickinson

Summary

Although a large proportion of the ceramic assemblage from the site is Roman, little was recovered from stratified Roman deposits. The two small ‘groups’ of Roman pottery from the rampart (Period 2c) and the occupation of the interval tower (Period 2d) also contain significant amounts of intrusive medieval pottery. A detailed catalogue of the excavated ceramics, including all coarse pottery illustrations, and the illustrated reports on The Decorated Samian Ware and The Samian Stamp by Brenda Dickinson have been published on micro-fiche.
The summary below draws attention to the pottery relevant to the dating of the five structural periods.

**Period 1**
There were no ceramic finds recovered from this phase.

**Period 2c – Rampart**
The sixty-three Roman sherds recovered from the rampart represent a minimum of 18 vessels (eleven of Samian ware). Apart from two Trajanic vessels from Les Martres-de-Veyre, the Samian ware suggests a Hadrianic or later date, post c. A.D. 125, for the construction of the rampart. The remaining coarse pottery vessels from the rampart do not conflict with this dating and include three locally produced mortaria of Hadrianic/Antonine date; a small rim fragment from a 2nd century BB1 vessel comparable with Gillam 1976, Nos. 1-3; a flagon similar to Gillam 1970, No. 4. A.D. 90-130 in an indeterminate oxidized sandy fabric; and two undatable reduced sandy ware jars. There are also three sherds of South Spanish amphora. Five small medieval sherds recovered from this phase are certainly intrusive, but this is not surprising as the rampart was unsealed.

**Period 2d – Interval Tower: Occupation**
Very little pottery, forty sherds, was recovered from the occupation of the tower. Apart from six medieval pieces (? intrusive) the pottery represents a minimum of seven Roman vessels. The two Samian ware vessels are represented by a first century South Gaulish sherd of indeterminate form and two fragments (joining with two unstratified sherds) of a Hadrianic Dr.15/17R from Les Martres-de-Veyre, and stamped by Albus iii (see The Samian Stamp p. 51*). The other pottery includes a sherd which joins with a locally produced mortarium of Hadrianic/Antonine date from Period 2c, the lower half of a BB1 ‘cooking pot’ with burnished lattice decoration suggesting an early to mid 2nd century date, and an undatable oxidized sandy ware bowl. The other two vessels are represented by two body sherds of an indeterminate sandy fabric and a similarly indeterminate colour-coated sherd. The Hadrianic Samian and the joining mortarium sherds suggest that this phase may be broadly contemporary with Period 2c.

**Period 2e – Features to the North of the Curtain Wall**
Twelve Roman sherds were recovered from these features, giving a minimum of five vessels. Two of these vessels are datable and include an Antonine Dr.33 from Lezoux, and a locally produced Raetian mortarium dated c. A.D. 160-200. The other vessels are represented by several body sherds in indeterminate sandy fabrics, and one sherd of South Spanish amphora.

**Period 2f – Miscellaneous Features**
The eight Roman sherds recovered from this phase give a minimum of four vessels, including two Trajanic Samian vessels (Dr.18/31) from Les Martres-de-Veyre, and a BB1 flat-rimmed dish of mid 2nd century date. The other vessel is represented by several indeterminate oxidized sandy sherds.
Period 3a - ?Oven

The twelve sherds recovered from the ?oven represent a minimum of five Roman vessels. The only datable piece includes a small rim fragment with burnished under-rim wavy-line decoration from a 2nd Century BB1 'cooking pot', a Central Gaulish Dr.3o, dated by its fabric to the Antonine period. A brick fragment was stamped (see The Brick Stamp, p. 63-4).

Period 3b - Robbing

The only datable sherd was identified as being Antonine-Central Gaulish Dr.31.

Period 1-3

There is a significant amount of pottery (15 sherds) from contexts with this broad phasing and which can only be used as a terminus post quem for Period 3. It involves a minimum of 9 vessels of which six are datable. There is a base sherd from a Mancetter-Hartshill mortarium which can only be given the broad date of A.D. 140-370, and a BB1 'cooking-pot' comparable with Gillam 1976, No. 3 of mid to late 2nd century date. The other 4 vessels are of Central Gaulish Samian ware and include two Antonine vessels (Dr.31 and 33), a Dr.37 dated c A.D. 150-180, and a fragment from a late Antonine Dr.43. It is worth noting that, unlike the pottery from the rampart and interval tower, the pottery from this period appears to be almost exclusively Antonine in date.

Period 4, 5 and Unstratified

Although much Roman pottery (45 sherds) was recovered from Period 4 and 5 the presence of significant amounts of post-medieval ceramics suggest that the earlier pottery is all residual and can be discussed in conjunction with the 109 unstratified Roman sherds. Together, this Roman material falls generally into a Hadrianic to Antonine date range with no indication from the Samian ware of early Antonine occupation. This suggests that it is probably derived from Periods 2 and 3 or contemporary deposits nearby.

The unstratified pottery also revealed the presence of two more Trajanic Samian ware vessels from Les Martres-de-Veyre, making a total of a minimum of three vessels (7 sherds) recovered from the site as a whole. (See The Samian Ware, pp. 48-50* for further comments). The lack of any 3rd or 4th century pottery from the excavation should also be noted.

Discussion

The main sequence is restricted to the curtain wall, tower and rampart area, the two ditches, A8, A40, were stratigraphically isolated and cannot be integrated.

Briefly, the Periods are as follows:-

Period 0 The natural subsoil.
Period 1 The ditch, A134.
Period 2 The curtain wall, interval tower and rampart.
Period 3 The ?oven and the robber trenches.
Period 4  The build-up of soil.
Period 5  The modern deposits.

The only unambiguous relationship as far as the ditches were concerned was between A134 and the overlying tower and rampart. Because the ditches A8 and A40 were isolated any interpretation of their significance can only be based on their position and dimensions. Given the presence of three ditches and two walls including Simpson's discoveries, it is clear that the sequence is complex and that further excavation is necessary before a definitive explanation can be advanced. However, a sequence can be postulated whereby ditch A134 is associated either with Simpson's stone wall or an earlier structure. There are problems with the first suggestion, not the least of which is the closer proximity of A134 to the stone wall. It can also be suggested that ditch A8 is contemporary with the curtain wall excavated in 1984. As for ditch A40 it could be associated with either the
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curtain wall or the stone wall. For the locality it is an acceptable distance to the north of the wall and its small size could be explained by the unstable nature of the subsoil.

It is worth noting here that the 1932 excavations in the yard of Stanwix school identified five parallel walls, not four as is commonly stated. The most northerly of them overlay the stone wall and seems to have been overlooked when the site was being interpreted. It is probable that two buildings were represented and that they were contemporary with the 1984 curtain wall rather than Hadrian’s Wall.

The pottery is relatively unhelpful because of the small quantity recovered, although it does allow an Antonine date for the construction of the rampart. There is also a distinct absence of third and fourth century pottery from the site.

In conclusion, the excavation’s principal contribution to our knowledge of the fort was the revelation of a previously unsuspected north curtain wall, proving the history of the fort’s development to be more complex than it was thought to be. The presence of three ditches confirmed the complexity and hinted at three or more periods of construction. Because it was already established that the fort was the largest on the Wall, the increase in its known area from 3.77 hectares (9.32 acres), to 3.96 hectares (9.79 acres), is only of secondary importance.

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