

ART. IX.—*Camp on Infell, Ponsonby.* By CHARLES A. PARKER, M.D.

Read at Seascale, September 25th, 1884.

HUTCHINSON, in his History of Cumberland, published in 1794, p. 26, writes:—

Upon Ponsonby Fell are the vestiges of an encampment said to be Roman; but the ground having never been opened, no altars or other antiquities have been found in or near it, to ascertain to what age or people it belonged.

Lysons and other writers copy this without addition. To begin with, this little known camp does not lie on Ponsonby Fell at all (though frequently referred to by that name), but on Infell, which is a rounded hill 562 feet in height in the Parish of Ponsonby, and just three miles from the sea coast. It is the property of Mr. E. Stanley. The high road from Whitehaven to the south passes about one mile to the west, and the camp is best reached by following the lane which turns off at the parsonage and going through the second gate on the left-hand, from which a cartroad leads through the hamlet of Ponsonby, directly to the spot. On the south-east and south-west the ground falls gradually from the summit of the hill to the high road and Mill Beck. On the north-west the slope is steeper, and at a distance of about 600 yards from the top of the hill descends abruptly to the River Calder, which, when in flood, would of itself be a formidable obstacle to an attacking force, as shown by its local name of "The Mad Beck." All this ground has been long under cultivation, but the level top, and north-east side, which slopes steeply down to Scar Green Beck, 150 feet below, are covered with heathery ling, over which the destroying plough has never passed. On the opposite side of the Scar Green Beck rises Ponsonby Fell. The whole of this north-east slope was planted several years since with
larch,

larch, but owing to the exposed situation most of the trees died, and the greater number of those that remain are miserable stunted things, from three to five feet high. The camp itself, which lies on this slope just below the crest of the hill, is for the most part covered with nothing but heather. Owing to these favourable conditions the ramparts and ditch are in very fair preservation, and can be distinctly traced all round. The camp is oblong in shape, having three right angles to the north, west, and south. The east angle is cut off, the north-east and south-east sides being joined by a smaller fifth side, running north and south, consisting like the others of ditch and rampart. This side is 22 paces in length, and has a wide gap in it. The other four sides measure as follows:—North-east, about 64 paces; north-west, about 52 paces; south-west, about 75 paces; south-east, about 41 paces. The ditch varies in depth from $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 6 feet. The earth has been thrown out of it on both sides, but principally to the inner side, forming ramparts about two feet in height at the present time. They are most distinct at the west angle where the ditch is six feet deep, two feet wide at the bottom, and the distance between the crests of the ramparts 22 feet. When standing inside the south angle, the inner rampart is seen to be six feet high; starting from the south angle the south-west side is almost perfect. A small runner trickles into the ditch. At the west angle is a gap through both ramparts, and at the north angle another; but in this last case, the gaps in the two ramparts are not opposite one another. On the north-east side are two gaps in the inner rampart. The south-east side is perfect. Near the north angle, 14 paces from the north-west ditch, and 13 from the north-east, are the remains of a tank which still holds water. It is rudely circular, measuring 27 feet in diameter. All round the edge the exploring iron strikes stone, within a foot from the present surface. The stones project here and there, and are rude cobbles. The
overflow

overflow passes out into the ditch through the gap near the north angle. The camp is somewhat sheltered from the sea wind by the crest of the hill. It is strongest on the north-east side (on which side the Roman would expect an enemy) and weakest on the south-east. Egremont Castle is not visible from it, but a point not far from it can be seen. A straight line drawn between these two points passes through Hale churchyard, where a Roman altar was found last year. From within a few yards of the south angle, the site of the camp at Ravenglass can be seen about seven miles away, and signals could be exchanged with that place. Hardknott and the Roman road up Eskdale are concealed by the intervening hills. The sea view is extensive, ranging from Black Combe to St. Bees Head. The whole hill-side, being let as a game covert, I have not been able to investigate as I might have done in open ground. With regard to the approaches to this camp, I would humbly suggest that the road between the camps at Ravenglass and Egremont or Moresby passed more inland than is generally thought. I have heard of a paved road, about 18 inches underground, near Bleawath farm-house, in Gosforth, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the coast. Tradition says that Calder Bridge and Yeorton bridge were originally Roman, and when once thus far inland, Moresby could be gained without passing through the dangerous, swampy, and probably wooded valley of St. Bees.

The upper part of a large quern was found in a bank about 300 yards from the camp, in July last.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.—The evidence of this camp being Roman is somewhat weak; the fact of the earth from the ditch having been thrown out on both sides; of the camp being five sided; and of its being strongest on the side most exposed to attack, seem to point to a different conclusion.