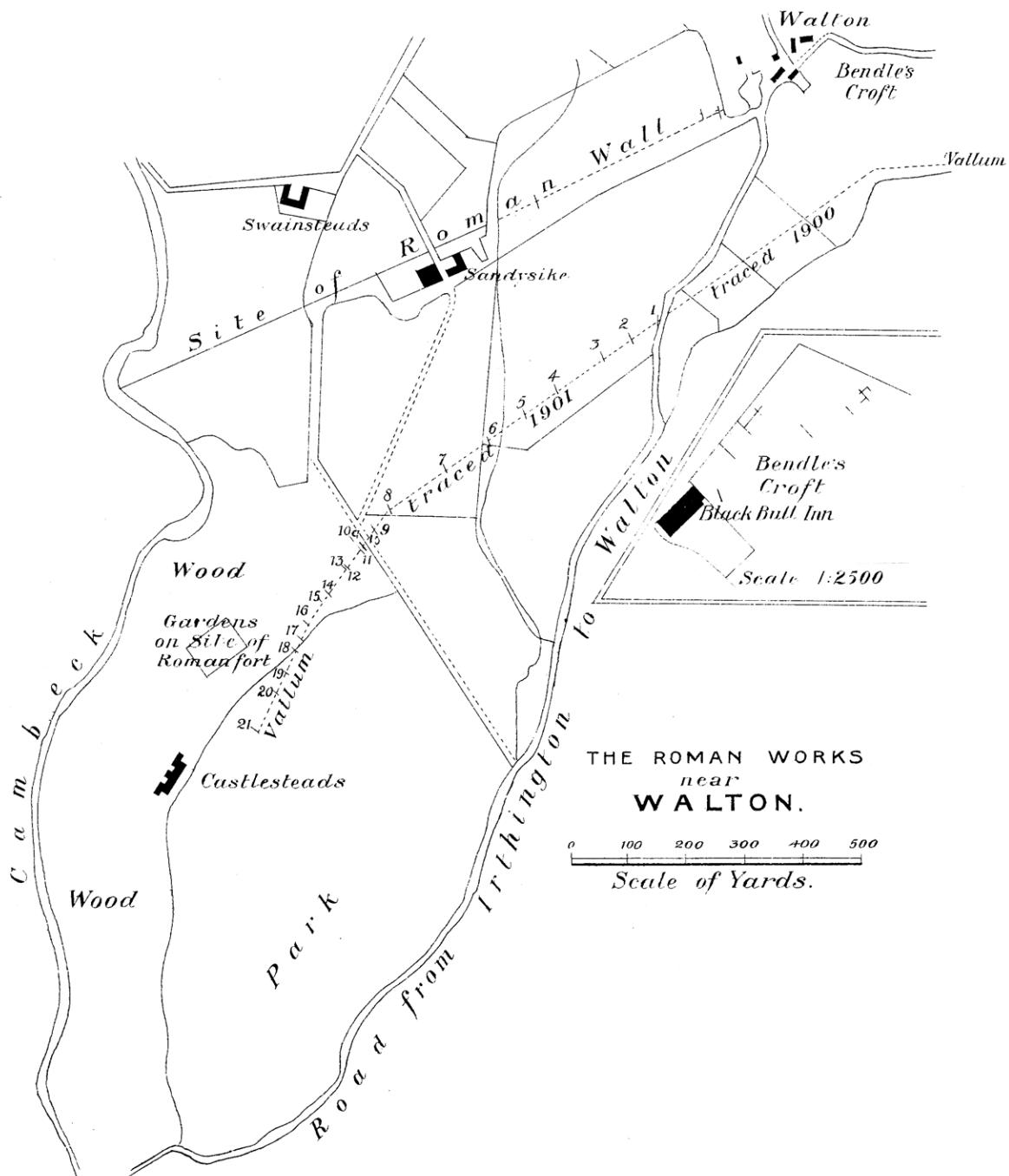


ART. XXVI.—*Report of the Cumberland Excavation Committee for 1901.* By F. HAVERFIELD, M.A., F.S.A., Hon. F.S.A., Scot.

THE eighth campaign of the Cumberland Excavation Committee was devoted to the continuance of the work commenced in 1900—namely, the exploration of the line of the Vallum near Walton and Castlesteads. It resulted in the addition to the map of another 1100 yards of this great earthwork, which had previously been laid down only by conjecture and laid down wrongly. It also contributed a really important fact to our knowledge of the whole mural question. For we were able to ascertain that the Vallum in this locality bends southwards out of its naturally straight line, in order to avoid the site of Castlesteads Fort. It may be remembered that the same feature had been noticed in our excavations at Birdoswald, at Rudchester in Northumberland, probably at Halton and—though with a difference—at Carrawburgh. It is a new feature, and for the interpretation of the Vallum a most important one. We may regard it as by itself an adequate reward for the labours of the excavation. In addition we were able to lay down correctly the course of the Wall at one point hitherto uncertain near Walton. On the other hand, an excavation undertaken by the present writer—not on behalf of the Committee, but in connexion with it—at Rudchester, yielded no definite result.

As usual, the excavations were greatly aided by the kindness of landowners and of farmers, who granted us all necessary permissions with much readiness. In particular, the Committee is indebted to the Earl of Carlisle for much kindly help; to Mr. F. P. Johnson, of Castlesteads, for leave to dig freely upon his land and for much



(TO FACE P. 385.)

encouragement and aid; to the Rev. C. P. Calvert, for leave to dig on the Sandysike Estate; further, to Mr. Thompson of Ridge Mount, to Mr. Thomas Tweddle of Newbiggin, to Mr. A. Gillespie of Irthing House, and to Mr. J. Mounsey of Hill Field, tenants of land excavated, for leaves to dig. All the work was done, as usual, under direct supervision. For valuable aid in surveying and planning, some of which was this year especially troublesome, thanks are due again to Mr. and Mrs. Hodgson.

We hope to be able to continue the work in the coming summer of 1902, and in particular to trace the precise course of the Wall at Walton village, and to follow the line of Vallum further westwards. It may also be desirable to make a brief excursion into central Cumberland to test the date of the alleged Roman earthwork at Caermot in the parish of Whirrigg and Torpenhow.

I.—THE VALLUM.

In 1900 our excavations had traced the buried ditch of the Vallum from near Craggle Hill to the high ground south of Walton village, and as far as the lane which leads from Walton to the Brampton and Longtown high-road. We resumed work in 1901 at this lane, as before tracing the ditch of the Vallum and unaided, save at one point, by any surface indications. We found the Vallum to continue from the lane to the field outside the Castlesteads woods in the same straight line as the last piece explored in 1900. Near the eastern hedge of this field, and east of the point where it crosses the field road from Sandysike, the line of the Vallum turns. The total length of the straight piece is just over 1,000 yards, and its direction is not quite parallel to that of the Wall, but slightly diverging: just outside the Castlesteads woods the two lines are about 380 yards apart. If the line of the Vallum had continued straight on from trench 8, it would have hit the northern front of the Castlesteads Fort, distant about 320 yards. It makes, however, a distinct

bend southwards, and passes well to the south of the fort. This bend does not, like so many bends on the Vallum, correspond to a bend in the line of the Wall, nor is any reason of ground or gradient assignable to it: the only apparent motive for it is desire to avoid the site of the Castlesteads Fort.

It may be convenient, even though tedious, to add some details of the trenches which yielded this interesting result. We may premise that the subsoils throughout the work consisted of red or yellowish clay and sand, which were easily distinguishable from the black matter characteristic of the bottom of the filling of the ditch and from the mixed soil forming the rest of the filling.

I.—We commenced on the Sandysike Estate in a field of 26 acres, called Grandy's Field. Our first trench, close to the above-mentioned lane, shewed in its south end the dip of the Vallum ditch, marred, however, by the nearness of the lane, which has here cut deep into the ground.

II.—Trench 2, 66 feet long, shewed the north slope of the Vallum ditch beginning at 48 feet from its north end, with the usual black matter visible at $51\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and the south slope of the ditch visible at $63\frac{1}{2}$ feet: this south slope was steep and well defined, dipping almost 4 in 3. We thought the centre of the ditch not quite so deep as its two ends—a feature which we have thought to notice elsewhere, but which is not often easy to verify in inches. The general depth of this ditch was 59·65 inches, but in the middle 55·57 inches.

III.—Trench 3, 25 feet long, shewed the north slope of the ditch and the characteristic black matter at the bottom, 62·67 inches deep.

IV.—Trench 4, 35 feet long, shewed both sides of the ditch about 17 feet apart, with the black matter 65·75 inches deep. The lower part of the north slope shewed an angle of 1 in 1.

V.—Trench 5, 24 feet long, revealed the north part of the ditch. The bottom of the ditch, six feet deep, was marked by a blue line: the ground here being on a slope towards a small watercourse, there was drainage for the water which ran into the ditch, and therefore the moisture did not (as elsewhere) collect, encourage vegetation, and produce the usual black matter. The north end of the flat bottom of

the ditch was found $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the north end of the trench.

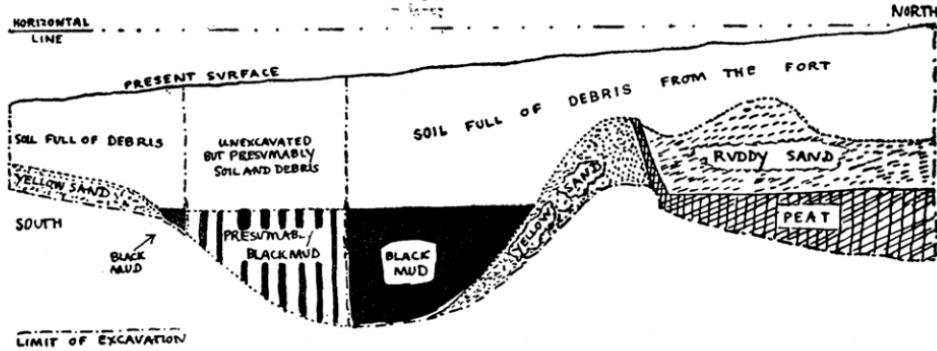
VI.—Trench 6, in the extreme north-west corner of Grandy's Field, 21 feet long, was less conclusive than the other trenches. Black matter was found in a layer 3 feet thick (3·6 feet deep), but owing to the bogginess of the subsoil, the profile of the ditch was not easy to verify.

VII.—We next proceeded into the "Great Field," and a little way up the rising ground dug a trench (7), 32 feet long, which shewed the ditch of the Vallum very plainly. At the bottom was black peaty matter standing out clearly against the red clay which formed the subsoil. The width of the bottom of the ditch appeared to be 14 feet.

VIII.—Trench 8, 35 feet long, shewed in its west or south end, near the hedge, the north (or east) slope of the Vallum ditch. The bottom of the ditch was seven feet below the present surface.

IX.—Trench 9, in the next field westwards, 58 feet long, shewed the ditch,—its north side $34\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the north end of the trench and its south side 49 feet from the same, with a line of black matter along the bottom at about 5 feet 8 inches deep. Here the ditch of the Vallum is still faintly visible on the surface, being represented by a slight but definite "slack" which crosses the field and enters the adjoining Castlesteads woods. A large oak tree stands in this "slack." The direction of the Vallum indicated by this "slack" and by trenches 9 and 11 following differs from that indicated by the preceding trenches (1-8), turning slightly more towards the south. This is the bend already mentioned, which takes the Vallum to the south of Castlesteads Fort. The exact point of the bend is between trenches 8 and 9 and probably close to trench 8.

Note that here the Vallum reaches the top of a small rise. It has run in a straight line for just over 1,000 yards, and its last bend, at that distance to the east, is likewise on the top of a small rise, while the ground between is lower than either spot. Here, as often, the line of the Vallum must have been surveyed from summit to summit. The summits are, however, too low and the slopes too gentle to constitute in themselves any reason for a bend on the line. Assuming that bends must occur, these are the places for them, but the real causes of the bends must be sought elsewhere—here, in the desire to avoid the fort, elsewhere often in the existence of a corresponding bend in the line of the Stone Wall.



SECTION OF TRENCH XIX. (pp. 389, 390).

SCALE 1 : 96.

X.—Trenches were also dug to complete the proof of the bend, by shewing that no traces of a ditch existed in a straight line with the line given by the preceding trenches (1-8). The north part of trench 9 and trench 10a served this purpose and others, not marked on the map, were dug near this latter. In all of them nothing but undisturbed subsoil was found.

XI.—Trench 11 (20 feet long) carried along a footpath near the east side of Castlesteads woods, cut the same line and "slack" as trench 9, and shewed the ditch with black matter—in this case, in two layers—at the bottom, 7 feet deep. At 4 feet from the surface, two bits of Samian and some other Roman potsherds were noticed—the first signs of our approach to an inhabited Roman site, that is, the Castlesteads Fort. When these fragments drifted hither is, of course, undiscoverable: it may have been in the eighteenth century, when the house and grounds of Castlesteads were laid out, the area of the Roman fort cleared to form a garden and much forced soil laid down in many spots around. In our later trenches (19-21) this forced soil was very abundant.

XII.—Thirty yards further west in the woods, a long trench (12) revealed the continuance of the ditch in the same direction as that given by trenches 9 and 11, with potsherds at a depth of 4·5 feet, and black matter marking the bottom very plainly at 6 feet.

XIII. to XVIII.—The next six trenches shewed the same general features: in each case we uncovered the north slope of the ditch with a portion of its flat bottom and a layer of black matter upon that. This black matter, we may observe, has nothing to do with the woods now growing above it: its sharp contrast with the surrounding soil makes that certain. As elsewhere, it represents the decayed vegetation and other matter which collected in the bottom of the ditch while it was open. In trench 16, this black matter attained the unusual thickness of 15 inches, and the bottom of the ditch was 8 feet below the present surface. In most of the trenches the surface soil, even to a depth of 3 feet, contained much debris of Roman stones and pottery—apparently of comparatively recent deposit.

It is to be further observed that the direction of the Vallum in these trenches, though roughly a straight line, shews a slight bend about trench 16 (see the map).

XIX.—With trench 19 we emerged from the Castlesteads woods on to the large grass-park which lies below and south of

them, and our three remaining trenches were dug in this pasture. Trench 19 gave singularly complicated results, which are illustrated on the annexed figure, reduced from a careful coloured drawing made by Mr. G. B. Grundy. The top stratum of soil, varying in depth from two to six feet, consists of earth mixed with stones, tiles, potsherds, and other debris from the neighbouring fort, not 100 yards distant. The strata beneath are more puzzling, but it is possible that we have here some part of the actual profile of the Vallum, its ditch, and two mounds on the north side of it. We may assume conjecturally that the Vallum, no doubt in a worn and battered condition, was actually visible on the surface at the time when the fort was cleared and the house and grounds laid out; then the débris was taken from the fort and piled in a thick layer, so as to hide completely the ditch and mounds of the Vallum. The black mud deposit is, on this hypothesis, the filling of the ditch, present in large part before the débris was laid on, while the peat at the north end, which was quite different in texture from the black mud, will represent an original deposit across which the Vallum was carried. This is merely hypothesis, and is not free from obvious objections; it is, however, the best we can offer.

XX.—Trench 20 (27 feet long) shewed the same top stratum of forced soil as was visible in trench 19, here 4 feet thick. Below that we found the two lips of the ditch about 20 feet apart; the ditch between was filled with a mixture of large stones and black earth, which contrasted sharply with the natural subsoil of sandy gravel.

XXI.—Our last trench (21) shewed the north slope of the ditch and part of its flat bottom. Owing to the accumulation of forced soil, the bottom of the ditch was not reached till $9\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep.

These trenches were superintended by Mr. Hodgson, Mr. R. P. L. Booker, and myself; in some of the later trenches Mr. Johnson and Mr. G. B. Grundy gave us great help.

II.—THE WALL.

The line of the Wall is somewhat uncertain at Walton. There is an old story that it underlies the Black Bull Inn on the south of the village, but no evidence of the story

is now discoverable. There is also a theory that a milecastle once stood in a corner of the field called Bendle's Croft, where now some beech trees and a mound face a bend in the lane from Walton to King Water; for this also evidence is lacking. In the past season we were able by digging trenches in the "Harvest Field" to fix the course of the Wall on the west of Walton village. Only the foundation courses and débris were remaining; in one case the foundations shewed the normal width of 9 feet 8 inches. One of the stones from the foundations was identified as belonging to the quarries at Coome Crags. We also attempted to find the Wall in Bendle's Croft, but in vain. It appears, however, that the mound in the corner of the field does not cover the ruins of a milecastle, as, indeed, some trenches made in 1900 had tended to prove. Probably our trenches and the mound are alike too far to the north. The line of the Wall in "Harvest Field," if continued east, would strike the end of the "Black Bull," and pass south of the mound.

The trenches in "Harvest Field" were supervised chiefly by Mr. Booker, and those in Bendle's Croft by myself.

III.—EXCAVATION AT RUDCHESTER.

It may be convenient to add here a brief account of some excavations carried out at Rudchester, by the permission of Mr. C. H. James, owner of the estate. Here there is a Roman fort, situated astride of the Wall like Chesters. It was hoped that a search such as that made at Chesters in 1900 might reveal the same important feature as was there discovered—the ditch of an earlier Roman frontier line passing across the area later occupied by the fort which we can now trace. The existence of modern roads makes the site more difficult to work than Chesters, but so far as we could judge, the line of an ancient ditch corresponding to that at Chesters would be immediately north of the modern highway (Wade's

Road), which here bisects the area of the fort. Two trenches were accordingly dug in this place, in the large field which is north-west of the Four-cross-road. No definite result ensued. The earth taken from the trenches contained no distinct objects, such as potsherds, which would prove it to be mixed, and it was itself of a puzzling character. One of the trenches revealed something resembling the usual black matter, but it was not clear enough to be accepted alone. The other, at the depth of 8 feet 9 inches, revealed a level face of solid rock, with the appearance of a sharp rise at the north end. Our workmen were confident that this surface had been artificially smoothed, and detected what they took to be pick-marks on it. Along it were patches of grey matter, and above it soil which appeared to be mixed. In view, however, of the absence of definite and unquestionable evidence, such as was forthcoming at Chesters, it may be well to suspend judgment, and to say only that the indications discovered in 1901 at Rudchester are favourable to the view that an ancient ditch existed there.

This excavation was superintended by the present writer, and visited by some of the Northumberland Excavation Committee.

EXPENDITURE, 1901.

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Labour in Cumberland	7 0 0
Compensation	2 0 6
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	£9	0	6
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This expenditure was partly defrayed out of the residue of the £100 voted by the Society in 1894. This residue (£4 3s. 5d.) was exhausted, and the balance was met from Oxford and other sources. The Rudchester expenses were defrayed separately.