

ART. V.—*Some fieldwork at Caermote.* By R. L. BELLHOUSE, B.Sc.

IN an earlier volume of *Transactions* I had occasion to discuss the place of Caermote in the Roman road-system in Cumberland (CW2 liv 21 f.); I now have to make a correction to my account of the site and my interpretation of some of its features, as the result of a visit to Caermote in April 1956, in company with Mr Brian Blake and Mr Iain MacIvor. My purpose was to confirm the full outline of the temporary camp of about 10 acres, of which I had found what seemed a partial outline (CW2 liv 22, footnote, and fig. 2). From experience gained elsewhere I was confident that by probing we could find the ditch and trace its course fairly easily—but we were quickly disillusioned: the whole area in which the fort lies is very stony immediately below the turf (although the glacial drift, a yellow mottled boulder-clay, is not), and much of our probing was therefore unintelligible; but we did trace and prove a typical ditch, alongside the north and east portions of the observed rampart. Fig. 1 shows the position where we proved it, and fig. 2 records our section of the ditch.

The peculiar shape of this part of the enclosure is surprising, but it is quite certain; it begins to look like an annexe to the earlier of the two forts (rather than an independent work). We were not able to trace either rampart or ditch continuing in the field to the west of the modern road (see fig. 1).

The other feature examined is almost certainly a road running out of the east gate of the fort. No ditch could be felt with the probe on either side of it, and the *agger* itself felt very hard and solid. It appears as a prominent causeway, about 12 ft. wide, across the soft ground from within the east gate of the large fort; after running eastwards for 90 yards it turns north through an angle of

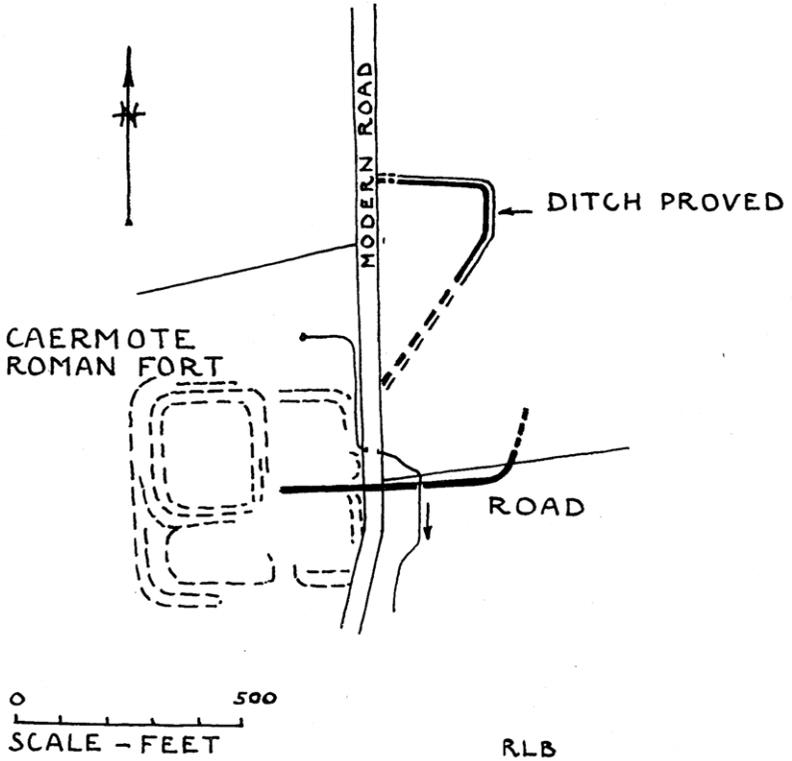
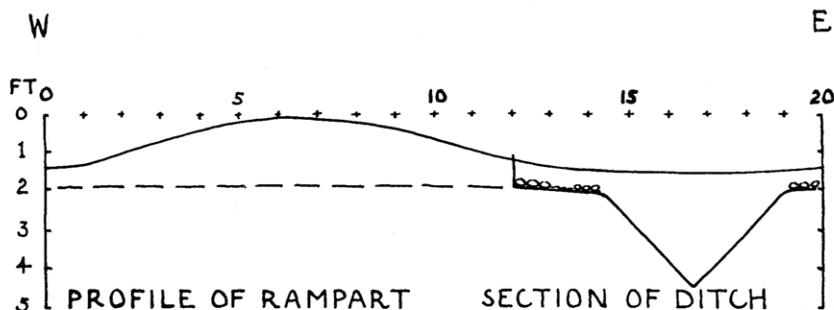


FIG. 1.—Rampart and road features near Caermote fort.

114° and then soon peters out in fairly sound ground. The reason for this was explained quite simply by Mr MacIvor: no reasonable unit-commander would expect his men to march out of the fort straight into a bog, and surely it would have been strange neglect not to provide proper approach-roads to a fort to whose construction much time and effort had been devoted.

This is a very pertinent question for the study of forts and the roads issuing from their gateways; one may wonder whether the roads northwards and southwards from Caermote may not also have petered out in the same way, once they had reached sufficiently firm ground.



R.L.B.

FIG. 2.—Normal type ditch associated with rampart already noted.

APPENDIX

For a summary of the evidence for the Roman forts at Caermote, and references to earlier accounts of the site, cf. CW2 xlvi 202 f., in the *Proceedings* of the Society's visit on 14 July 1948, when Professor Richmond was the speaker; CW2 iii 330 f. records the trial excavations of 1902, by Haverfield for the Cumberland Excavation Committee, which established the main features of the site but did not yield direct evidence for the dating of its successive structural periods: further excavation, directed to securing such evidence, is badly needed. E.B.