

ART. V.—*Investigations on Hadrian's Wall west of Carlisle, 1960.* By S. H. BARTLE, B.A.

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ON behalf of the Durham University Excavation Committee I have been examining the western sector of Hadrian's Wall, between Bowness on Solway and Carlisle, in order to locate milecastles whose sites have hitherto been uncertain. As one travels eastward from M/c 76 (Drumburgh) towards Carlisle, only one milecastle, M/c 73, had been identified (CW2 lii 16) — and is visible on the ground today as a low mound. Making use of the known positions of M/c 73 and Turret 72b, I first examined the sites where by measurement Turret 72a and M/c 72 should occur, approximately 540 yds. or a third of a Roman mile apart; in neither case was there any surface indication to go on.

At the measured position of Turret 72a at West End, Burgh-by-Sands, the topsoil yielded two sherds of wheel-made jars in grey fabric, from two different vessels of Hadrianic or later date. As the main object of the investigation was to locate milecastles, no further work was done here, and trial trenching was next begun on the calculated site of M/c 72 at Fauld Farm, Burgh-by-Sands, with the kind permission of Mr Robert Irving, the farmer.

Both at M/c 73 to the west and at the site of the medieval fortified manor-house to the east, the Wall had been found to run considerably further north than the conjectural line marked on the 25-in. Ordnance Survey sheets;<sup>1</sup> but, allowing for changes in the Wall's course, it seemed likely that in the region of M/c 72 it had been

<sup>1</sup> At M/c 73: CW2 lii 16. At the site of the manor-house: CW2 liv 108 f.

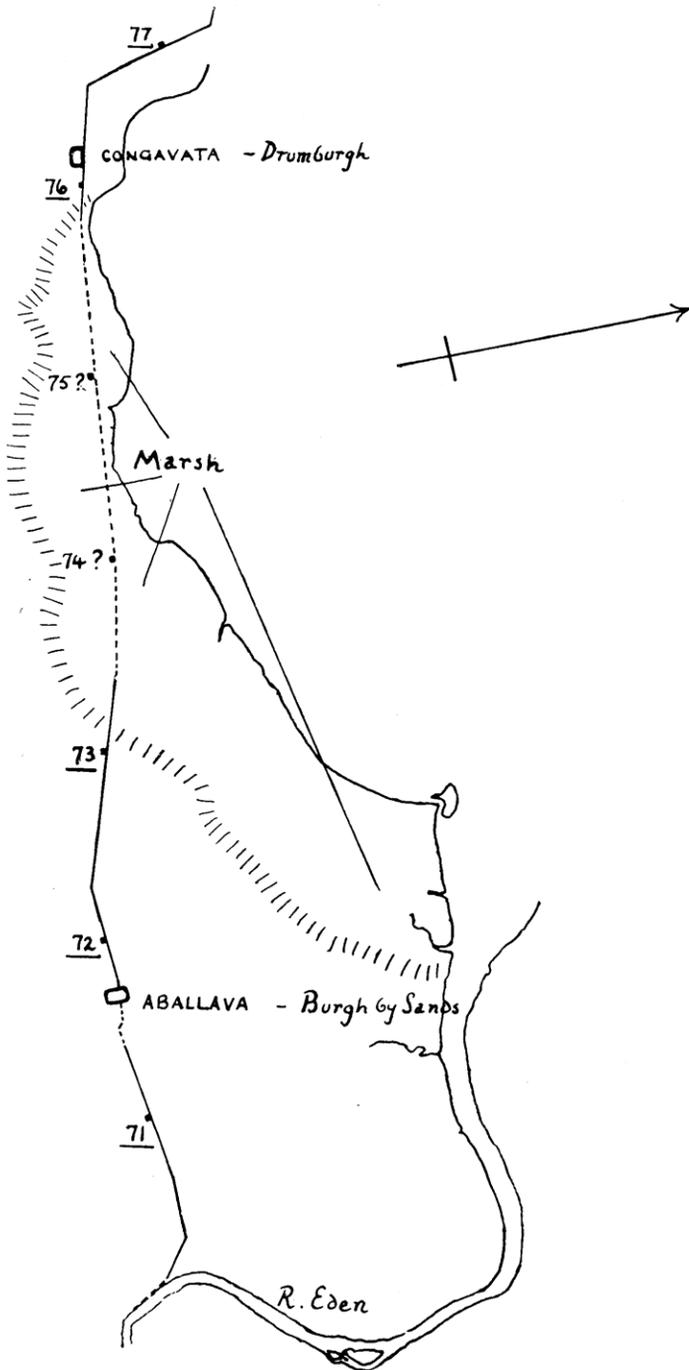


FIG. 1.—Sketch-plan of the Wall-miles 71/77; the numbers of identified milecastles are underlined.

plotted fairly accurately. This surmise proved correct: a N.-S. trial trench, 9 ft. long, revealed the north face of the Wall's foundation, robbed to the very footings, with one large block of characteristic rough-dressed ashlar remaining in a dislodged position, where it had been overlooked by the stone-robbers. Next an E.-W. trench, 20 ft. long, revealed the west wall of the milecastle, again severely robbed down to its cobble foundation; on widening the trench, wall-core was revealed, measuring about 6 ft. across, but no trace of footings survived. The same was found to apply to the Wall when the N.-S. trench was extended to the south across it, but traces of footings were revealed on widening that trench, on the southern face of the Wall: the remains of its core measured a little over 7 ft. across, and must have extended over a foot further north.

To check the accuracy of the estimated position of the footings of the west wall of the milecastle, a trench 6 ft. by 3 ft. was dug at the point where the N.W. angle should come. Here the footings of the west wall were in evidence, but those of the Wall were very disturbed; however, fragments of corroded sandstone indicated that the inner face of the N.W. angle was exactly where it had been anticipated.

The south and east walls of the milecastle were not accessible for examination in 1960, and so the next trench was dug across the position of the north gateway, in an attempt to determine the precise axis; digging was restricted in the east by a garden wall and in the west by a farm track. There were signs of great disturbance, and modern pottery was found 2 ft. below the surface, whereas elsewhere on the site the Roman footings occur between 1 ft. and 18 in. below the surface; but one large dressed stone, severely corroded, was found at a depth of 1 ft. 3½ in., resting on small flat stones 2 ft. down. The northern edge of the stone was in direct alignment with the north face of the Wall; its general shape suggests that it may

have been a voussoir or even a keystone. It seems to have fallen on to the flat stones from a considerable height, for they were indented and one of them was broken in two; the stone itself may have been left by the stone-robbers because it had been damaged in the fall. Whether it was a voussoir or not, it was found very close to where the axis of the milecastle should occur, and in the right position for the outer archway of the gate-tower. South of it was an accumulation of carelessly tumbled small masonry, lying above what appeared to be road metalling.

The site as a whole was much disturbed, and there were many signs of the interment of farm animals in recent times.

On present evidence, M/c 72 corresponds closely to M/c 79 (CW2 lii 17 ff.), except that it appears to stand more squarely upon the position of the earlier turf and timber milecastle; examination of the south and east walls, planned for 1961, may well confirm this point. Its position corresponds closely with Horsley's account (*Britannia Romana* 156):

"I take it, that about a quarter of a mile west from this town there has been a *castellum*; for at this place they have dug up a larger quantity of stones, than the bare thickness of the wall could well have afforded. They call the field the *Watch-hill*, and a remarkable tree in it is called the *watch-tree*; and the tradition runs that in antient times there was a watch tower on this spot."

In any case, the presence of a modern Excise tower, a few yards to the north of the milecastle, confirms the value of the site as a vantage-point.<sup>2</sup> Horsley continues,

"I was also told that they sometimes struck upon a pavement hereabouts, not far from the track of the wall, and that the stones they found there, were such as they now use in paving. This I think, must be the military way, especially since it seems to have been between the two walls."

Bruce adds a useful note (RW2 279):

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mr Robert Hogg's note, CW2 liii 217 and plate facing 216, dealing with the similar tower at Drumburgh and mentioning this one.

"Before reaching Dykesfield we come to a gentle eminence, which is called Watch Hill — a name that seems to indicate its ancient use. Some considerable buildings must have been erected upon it, for it is so full of stones that when the contiguous land was drained, it was considered unnecessary to continue the trenches over it."

In the course of the trial trenching, a quantity of Roman pottery was found, together with iron nails and two fragments of glass. The pottery comprises fragments of amphorae, cooking-pots, jars, flagons, and one tiny piece of figured samian. There is one fragment of a typical Hadrianic-Antonine cooking-pot in a black gritty fabric and showing acute-angled cross-hatching. Many of the fragments are not closely datable, but several are pretty certainly of 2nd century date; none could be assigned for certain to the 3rd or 4th centuries.

After the position of M/c 72 on Fauld Farm had been established, I next examined the problem of calculating the position of M/c 71, near Wormanby. The intervening turrets presented a problem. (a) The measured position of Turret 71b falls within the extension of the churchyard, north of the main road opposite St. Michael's church; when the fort of ABALLAVA was built the turret will have been demolished (as in the cases of Chesters and T. 27a, Housesteads and T. 36b, and Birdoswald and T. 49a TW), but as we do not yet know the original course of the Wall hereabouts,<sup>3</sup> it is not possible to plot the position of the turret with any certainty. But it may be relevant to note that a recent grave, dug near the approximate position of the turret, produced Roman pottery at a depth of about 2 ft. 6 in., 3 in. higher than some sandstone slabs; the pottery comprised:

1. A large grey jar, wheel-turned, not earlier than Hadrian, but the fabric could be 3rd century.
2. The rim of a bowl or dish, without external cross-hatching; not a well-marked type: it could be Antonine or later, but is certainly not earlier.

<sup>3</sup> It may well have been modified somewhat to fit in with the fort when it was built.

(b) The course of the Wall is unknown, between a point a little to the west of the fort and a point a little to the west of Powburgh Beck, except for a very short section discovered by Mr Robert Hogg (CW2 liv 105), where it was found a considerable distance north of the conjectured line. Thus, it was impossible to make really accurate measurements in order to locate Turret 71a; but measuring from M/c 72, a distance of 1,080 yards (the equivalent of two-thirds of a Roman mile) would make the turret's position a little to the west of the recently-repaired bridge over the Fleam or Greathill Beck.

The plotting of M/c 71 depended on an accurate computation of the distance covered by the unknown sector of the Wall just discussed. To do this, all the possible changes in the Wall's direction were allowed for, and were incorporated into the measurement of one Roman mile, 1,620 yds., from the established site of M/c 72. Examination of the position of M/c 71, on this computation, revealed no surface indications of any description. However, Mac Lauchlan's *Memoir*, 1858, 80, notes that at Beaumont

“the Wall bends about 33° to the Southward, and at about 2½ furlongs from the church, there is a pond and green spot, like the site of a Mile Castle. It will be seen, as also from some previous remarks, that we are unable to fix with confidence the sites of the Mile Castles towards the Western part of the line; in this instance the place is a Roman mile from Burgh, which strengthens the supposition.”

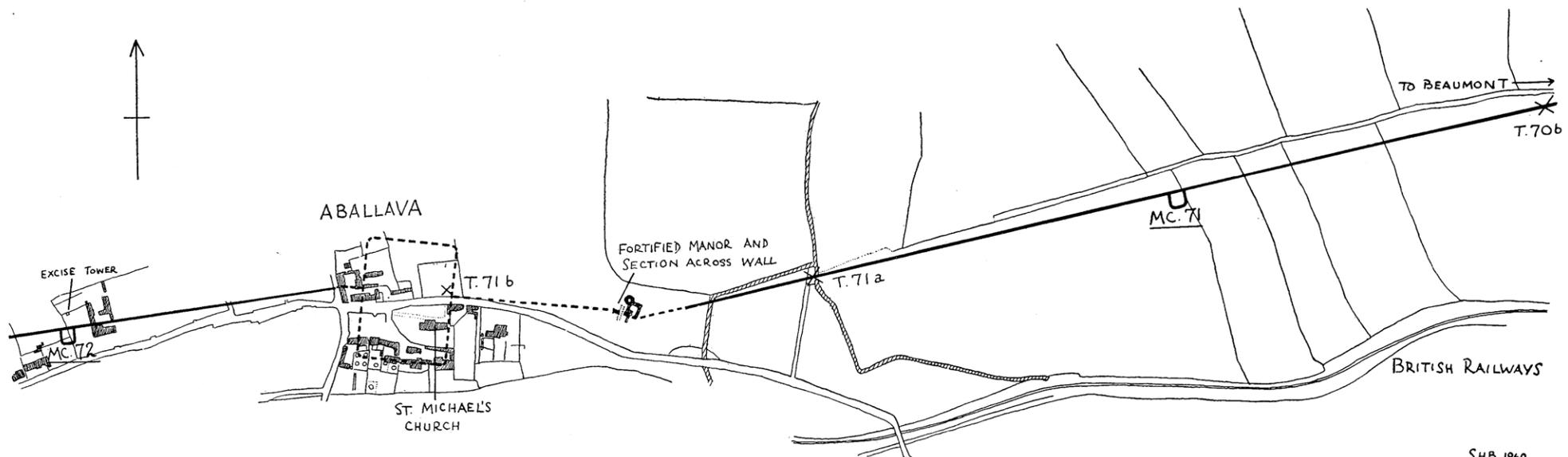
The “green spot” is still visible today, approximately where Mac Lauchlan located it; but it is not in fact M/c 71 but Turret 70b, coming exactly one-third of a Roman mile east of my measured position of M/c 71.

With the kind permission of Mr John Miller, the farmer, successive trial trenches on the site of M/c 71 revealed remains of the axial road where it runs through the Wall, and also the milecastle's west and south walls; the east wall lies beneath a field boundary, and could therefore

not be located. Modern drainage ditches, several yards in width, running from north to south across the field, make identification of the site on the ground impossible, and they will hamper sections across the milecastle when they come to be made. Very few small finds were made, as there was no time to investigate the interior of the milecastle. A flint scraper was found, stratified, just inside the inner face of the footings of the west wall; another worked flint, broken but in good condition, was found stratified near the position of the S.E. angle, during unsuccessful trenching for the east wall. Two small fragments of pottery were found amongst the very disturbed footings of the south wall; both are from fairly fine wheel-made vessels, in hard, orange self-coloured fabric, heavily charged with sparkling grit. The fabric, as Mr J. P. Gillam points out to me, is one of that small group of fabrics which are common both to the Roman and medieval periods; the fineness of the present fragments together with the context of one of them (an identical fragment was found stratified in the cobble foundation of M/c 72), suggests that they are in fact Roman. One of them is orange on surface but grey in fracture, the other orange throughout.

On the whole, the remains of M/c 71 are in rather worse condition than those of M/c 72, in spite of the relative isolation of the site, which might have been expected to give it greater protection from stone-robbing; but further digging there should prove of value. Another season's work should also produce further sites to the east, now that the firm basis for measurement has been advanced thus far; little hope can be raised for the stretch along the bluffs above the Eden, but there seems good reason to hope that it will be possible to establish the position of M/c 69. The problem of the siting of M/cs 74 and 75 is also to receive active attention.

I would like to thank the following for their help and kindness to me during my work: Mrs G. M. Hodgson of



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FIG. 2.—Milecastle and turret positions in the Burgh-by-Sands area (sketch-map based, by permission, on the O.S. map).

West End, Burgh-by-Sands; Mr Robert Irving of Fauld Farm; Mr John Miller of Midtown Farm; the Rev. W. L. Beckles Goodwin, vicar of Burgh and Mr Thomas Crudace, the temporary sexton. I am also very grateful to Mr R. L. Bellhouse and Mr Robert Hogg for their assistance and facilities for studying the Ordnance Survey plans and in field-work. I am indebted to Mr J. P. Gillam for the descriptions of the pottery, and to Professor Eric Birley, in particular, I owe the opportunity to undertake such an interesting and rewarding investigation.