

ART. III.—*The problem of Burrow Walls.* By R. L. BELLHOUSE, B.Sc.

Read at Carlisle, April 3rd, 1965.

SOMETIMES when I lecture to students, questions are asked about the Roman names of forts and towns and the way in which, for example, fort names on Hadrian's Wall in the *Notitia Dignitatum* were assigned to specific sites. On one occasion, seeking to use a local example, I described the finding of the Roman fort at Burrow Walls in an area where the *Notitia* list gave us an extra name, and there was obviously a gap in our knowledge.

During the discussion that followed I began to feel that I had not chosen a very good illustration because I had just explained the case for a fort in the St Bees area in the hope that I could spur someone on to do some serious field-work there. If a fort was ever found near St Bees then we would have an extra fort and no spare name in the *Notitia*, and the time was ripe for a reappraisal of Burrow Walls in relation to the latest thought on the Cumberland coast.

Work on the Cumberland coast in 1955 proved the existence of the outlines of about half a Roman fort: two ditches, a cobbled rampart base, and their orientation generally invited close comparison with the Hadrianic forts at Beckfoot and Moresby (CW2 lv 30 f.). It seemed then that this discovery had settled the problem of the missing fort on the Cumberland coast; hitherto Moresby fort had been given the name GABROSENTUM, and a hypothetical fort near St Bees, TUNNOCELUM; now we could shift the names up the coast and the need for a fort at St Bees vanished, Burrow Walls becoming GABROSENTUM. Since 1955 I have had cause to consider Burrow Walls afresh; first

in 1961 when preparing my paper on Moricambe (CW2 lxii 56 f.), and again in 1962 in the light of the new information from mile-fortlet 22 (CW2 lxiii 140 f.). Put very briefly, I think we shall find that both towers and mile-fortlets were dismantled c. A.D. 158 when the Roman army returned to the Wall, and that certain key sites only were re-occupied, for example, mile-fortlets 5 and 9, to watch the entrance to Moricambe, and the large forts to house the various units. If this was so, need we hesitate to suggest that Burrow Walls was dismantled also at that time?

One must admit that the evidence for Burrow Walls being a Hadrianic addition to the Coast Series on the site of tower 29a is hardly conclusive, but even so, dismantling after A.D. 158 would help to explain much; the ditches became partly silted and supported birch trees for many years before 4th-century sherds found their way into them. The fact that the late ditch was made within the plan of the earlier fort may mean either that nothing survived worth remaking, or the ditches were still a sufficient obstacle without resectioning to provide outer ditches for a triple-ditched enclosure, hastily and roughly made to meet the new threats of the 4th century. Accepting then Hadrianic foundation, disuse after A.D. 158 and the site abandoned until the 4th century, can we be sure that it had a Roman name?

On topographical grounds alone it seemed to me quite reasonable to apply *Gabrosentum* to Moresby as the name means "Goatpath", and to imagine that the Tribune of the first cohort of Hadrian's Own Marines would find convenient harbourage in the mouth of the Derwent at *Tunno celum*: all I had to do was to reverse their order on the ground, but even so, if the order in the *Notitia* is correct, the case for a fort near St Bees is re-opened, and no name survives for Burrow Walls.

Feeling a little out of my depth in these matters I wrote to Mr John Gillam in 1963 for his comments on

my ideas; his reply was of such immediate interest that I feel it should be reproduced here.

My own view on the subject is very similar to yours. The actual history of Burrow Walls before the 4th century is not fully established. This is no criticism of the excavation. At how many forts is the structural history fully established with more digging than you were able to do?

As you say, all we have is a shadowy hint of Hadrian, and 4th century firmly established. Your suggestion of "either no early stone fort, or demolition and transport . . ." seems to me feasible and not unlikely. In any case we have no evidence that Burrow Walls was occupied when either the source of the Ravenna list was first written, presumably in the Antonine period, as the Antonine Wall is in, or when the Wall subsection of the *Notitia* was first written, which I would put in the late 3rd century. So Burrow Walls, though it will have had a name, may well be absent from both lists. On this basis I would interpret them so: last column, first alternative:

RAVENNAS	NOTITIA DIG.	O.S. 111	Alternative
MAIO		Bowness	same
BRIBRA		Beckfoot	same
ALAUNA		Maryport	same
GABROCENTIO	GABROSENTUM	Burrow Walls	Moresby
IULIOCENON	TUNNOCELUM	Moresby	St Bees ¹ ²
CANTIVENTI	GLANNIBANTA	Ravenglass	same

My reasons may be summarized like this: MAIA is in Ravennas twice, once on the coast and once on the Wall, and also on Rudge cup and Amiens patera. That fixes it securely as Bowness. CANTIVENTI=GLANNIBANTA is also in the Antonine Itinerary as CLANOVENTA, and is thus securely fixed as Ravenglass. With the two ends fixed we have now four names and four sites. The obvious identification is as the O.S., but my real reason for sticking to my earlier identification is that the inscriptions of COH II THRACUM at Moresby fit so well the *Notitia* unit for GABROSENTUM that I am very hesitant to drop it. ALAUNA=Maryport is common ground on the strength of the Ellen river name, which automatically makes BRIBRA=Beckfoot. That leaves us with a spare name *Tunnocelum* and a spare fort Burrow Walls. I do not think we can make that identification even though I like your idea of Aelia Classica in the mouth of the Derwent, because the *Notitia*

¹ Undiscovered site near St Bees, J.P.G.; or

² Burrow Walls, R.L.B., if we tamper with the order.

and Ravennas order is the same, and they therefore confirm each other. What I suggest is that somewhere south of St Bees Head, perhaps near St Bees itself, lies an undiscovered fort which is *Tunnocelum*. OCELUM means headland, so it should not be far from St Bees. There have been many chance finds thereabouts — quite a clutch of dots on O.S. III.

That leaves Burrow Walls without a name, but that is explicable if it was not occupied when either list was drawn up. This is your point so far as the *Notitia* is concerned. I think it applies to Ravennas as well.

The problem of Burrow Walls must remain with us until new facts are discovered. The most satisfactory solution would be the finding of the "missing fort" somewhere near St Bees, the case for which is strengthened by the evident Roman character of the road thereto from Egremont (CW2 lx 25 f.). The immediate alternative is to go back to Burrow Walls and section the early ditches very carefully in the hope that a study of their silting would confirm early abandonment of the site and no re-occupation for a very long time.