

## AN EXPLORATORY TURRET OF THE ROMAN WALL:

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READ BY DR. BRUCE, WEDNESDAY, 29TH AUGUST, 1883.

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HAVING heard last week that a mile-castle had been discovered on the Wall in the vicinity of Greenhead, and that it was likely to be speedily removed, Dr. Hodgkin and I went last Friday to make enquiries respecting it. Captain Coulson, of Blenkinsop Castle, kindly met us at the Greenhead station, and took measures for our being able comfortably to accomplish our mission. Instead of a mile-castle, as we had supposed, we found that it was an exploratory turret which had been exposed; this was, to a certain extent, an agreeable surprise, for although we have several mile-castles on the Wall in a tolerable state of preservation, we have but two turrets, and both of these have been but recently brought to light through the exertions of Mr. Clayton. It may be well here to quote Horsley's account of these turrets. He says, "The smaller turrets (in Latin, *turres*) have been more generally and entirely ruined than the *castella*; so that it is hard to find three of them anywhere together with certainty. The distance between two, where it was thought surest, was measured and found to be near 14 chains, or 308 yards. It therefore seems most probable that there have been four of these between every two *castella*, at equal distances from the *castella*, and one another; for thus five intervals will just amount to 7 furlongs, the usual or mean distance between the *castella*, and this scheme answers with a good deal of exactness to the situation of all the turrets that have yet been discovered. These exploratory turrets, or watch towers, seem to have been only about four yards square at the bottom, and by placing centinels at each of these, who must have been within call of one another, the communication quite along the Wall might be kept up, without having recourse to the fiction of a sounding trumpet or pipes laid underground, from one end of the Wall to the other." The two turrets to which we have referred

as having been recently exposed are situated, the one at East Brunton and the other on the Black Carts Farm near the Limestone Bank. An account, by Mr. Clayton, of the excavation of the latter appears in the seventh volume of our Transactions, page 256. Both are in an encouraging state of preservation. There are traces of another turret to the west of the station of AMBOGLANNA, Birdoswald, but they are so slight that few explorers will notice them. This new turret stands on the top of the cliff which forms the western extremity of the great basaltic dyke over which the Wall runs for about ten miles in the central part of its course. The cliff is about 100 feet above the plain to the north, and as it descends rapidly to the west, a most extensive view is obtained to the north, the south, and the west. It must have formed a good look-out station. The north-east angle of the turret is standing eleven courses of stones high. Its side walls are nearly as high. The walls are 3 feet 2 inches thick. The size of the turret (inside measurement) is 13 feet 6 inches from east to west and 12 feet 10 inches from north to south. The south wall has not yet been cleared of the rubbish which has encumbered it for ages. During the course of excavation numerous bones of animals were, as usual, found, one of them being the lower jaw of a young boar. One or two specimens of embossed Samian ware were turned up, together with fragments of an amphora and other species of pottery. In the southern face of the wall, near the turret, has been found an inscribed stone, which, however, is scarcely legible. The first line seems to read COH. III., the second line we could make nothing of, though we tried hard. I have already said that this turret, or stone sentry-box as we may call it, stands upon a basaltic cliff, the last in a westerly direction of the Nine Nicks of Thirlwall. The cliff is now being quarried, and largely supplies the towns and cities to the east and west of it with paving stones. Should the quarrymen proceed right on, the turret will soon be undermined and disappear; already its north-west angle has fallen. It is probably not too much to suppose that upon a proper representation being made to them, the lessees of the quarry will, out of regard to the interests of antiquarian science and respect to the labours of men whose arms have been nerveless these seventeen centuries and more, spare the turret, and direct their operations to other quarters. Our

excellent secretary, Dr. Hodgkin, was thoughtful enough to bring some photographic plates to bear upon the building, which, if the wind was not too strong to render the operation successful, will enable our members to form an idea of the existing state of the building; but, under any circumstances, as soon as the south wall is excavated and the whole interior made clear, it will be well if our secretary, Mr. Blair, who serves us so diligently and so well, will bring his art as a draughtsman to bear upon it, and to give us a correct representation of it. A good engraving will be of value to a late posterity. Horsley observes that in his time it was hard to find two or three turrets anywhere together with certainty, and he also states, as we have seen, that they have been more generally and entirely ruined than the mile-castles. The Wall and all its appurtenances was, in the dark ages, the prey of spoilers whenever stone was wanted; as the turrets projected from the Wall, and though very substantial, were less so than the mile-castles and the Wall, they were the first to be removed. Horsley is generally very accurate in his statements, and worthy of the utmost reliance; still, it is desirable that we had the means of verifying his statement as to the distance between the turrets. I have reason to know that when Mr. Clayton discovered the turret on the Black Carts Farm, and cleared the Wall for a considerable distance to the westward of it, he caused diligent search to be made for any traces of a turret, but without success. The impression made upon the minds of those of us who watched the proceedings, was that the distance between the turrets was really greater than Horsley supposed. I would like much that diligent search should be made on the line of the Wall to the east of the newly-discovered turret, to see if some trace of another cannot be found, so as to set at rest the question to which I have referred.