

# I.—A CIVILIAN BATH-HOUSE OF THE ROMAN PERIOD AT OLD DURHAM.

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[Read on 24th November 1943.]

## (i) *Earlier history and records of Old Durham.*

The name Old Durham is applied in and after 1268<sup>1</sup> to a manor which belonged to the rectory of St. Nicholas, Durham, until 1443, when it was appropriated to Kepier Hospital. In 1479, Old Durham was accordingly leased by Ralph Booth, as master of Kepier, for ninety-nine years, to his brother, Richard Booth, and descendants; on the expiry of this lease in 1578 the estate reverted to John Heath, warden of the Fleet, who, in 1569, had purchased the possessions of the dissolved hospital of Kepier; later still, through an heiress of the Heaths, Old Durham passed to the Tempests, who built there a new manor-house amid pleasant walled gardens. These gardens were still a pleasure resort in the middle of the nineteenth century, but the house had been abandoned a century earlier, and replaced by a farm house, a little to the south east, still called Old Durham.

This, however, is not the only ancient site in the neighbourhood (see fig. 1). A quarter of a mile to the west, on the opposite bank of the Wear, a prominent wooded hill is occupied by the fine prehistoric promontory-fort known as

<sup>1</sup> For 1268, Surtees, *Durham* iv, 2, 91, quoting *Cart. Orig. 3a 14d Spec. D. & C. Treas.*; *Veteris Dunelm.*; for 1303, *Surtees Soc.* xcix, 164, ditto; for 1445, *Surtees Soc.* xcv, 208ff.; for 1479, *ibid.* 260; for subsequent history, *ibid.*, pp. xxviii, xxix.

Maiden Castle, which attracted the attention of antiquaries even before Old Durham. For, in fact, Stukeley<sup>2</sup> in 1776 refers solely to Maiden Castle, though describing it as Roman in the manner of his age. Old Durham is first mentioned as an archaeological site only in 1782 by John Cade,<sup>3</sup> who, while discussing the course of a possible Roman

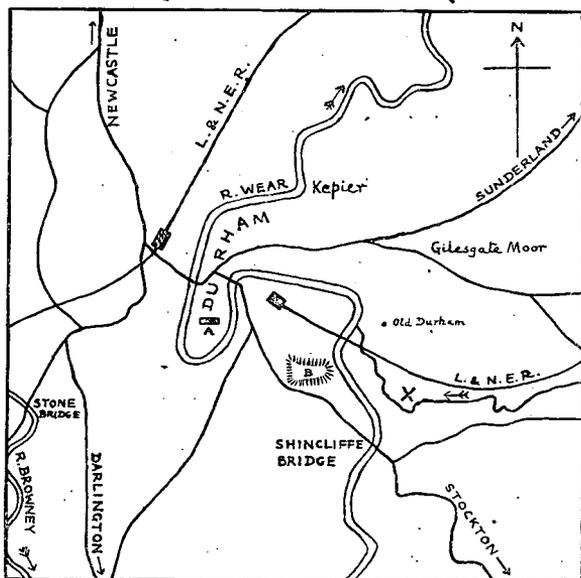


FIG. I. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF OLD DURHAM.

(Scale: 1 inch to 1 mile.)

(A. Durham Cathedral, B. Maiden Castle, X. The Roman Bath-house.)

road from the Tees to Chester-le-Street (see p. 18), refers to the discovery of Roman coins both at and near Old Durham, though without specifying exactly the places where they were found.<sup>4</sup> Cade, however, seems to have been unfamiliar

<sup>2</sup> *It. Bor.* 70.

<sup>3</sup> *Archæologia* vii (1785), 74ff.

<sup>4</sup> *loc. cit.* 78: "I have authority to say that coins have been formerly ploughed up here, and lately some of the lower empire have also been discovered within its vicinage." It will be noted that this implies two distinct discoveries: (a) in former ploughing at Old Durham and (b) not far from Old Durham.

with the hill-fort at Maiden Castle, even though he illustrates it;<sup>5</sup> for he quotes Stukeley's description of Maiden Castle only to criticize it for not conforming to his own site of Old Durham, which is clearly identified by his reference to the Pidding rivulet,<sup>6</sup> now known as Sherburn House Beck. Cade's actual words are thus worth citation.

"This station, I imagine, was formerly thought of great consequence, but it at length suffered the fate of many others in the northern parts, when William the Conqueror made that horrid devastation between York and this place, and erected his castrum in the new city; the fortifications were then partly levelled, but enough is left to point out its former magnitude and importance; it being in my opinion much larger than Dr. Stukeley has described; and the rivulet Pidding has, with great labour and ingenuity, been diverted from its original channel, where it ran into the Wear, near Shinkley Bridge, to answer the purpose of the Fosse along the southern and western sides of it."

Hutchinson,<sup>7</sup> a rival of Cade, is very critical of this topographical description, which had virtually confused the two sites. He himself gives a good description of the hill-fort and its approaches, seeing clearly that this is the Maiden Castle described by Stukeley. He then observes that Cade's Old Durham site has no wide prospect, stands only 15 feet above the rest of the plain, and consists of "some deep trenches and high earth fences; but the whole is so irregular that it is not possible to derive any distinct figure from the remains of the works." Surtees,<sup>8</sup> however, agrees that Cade fixed the site of a Roman fort at Old Durham "with great appearance of probability" where "vestiges of trenches and earthen ramparts may still be traced," and

<sup>5</sup> Cade's plate certainly portrays Maiden Castle, to judge from the position of the Cathedral and of Houghall woods (*Archæologia* vii, 75).

<sup>6</sup> *op. cit.* 77. The name Pidding Beck is now confined to a tributary of the Sherburn House Beck; on the latest O.S. map the lower reaches of the latter are called Old Durham Beck. It flanks the Old Durham site on the west and flows into the Wear opposite the north west corner of the farm. The traces of the diversion mentioned by Cade are still clear, but appear to be an old bed of the Wear itself.

<sup>7</sup> *Durham* ii (ed. 1787), 308ff.; (ed. 1825) 393ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Durham* iv, pt. 2, p. 91.

explains Maiden Castle as additional defences. Thus, while older antiquaries agree on the existence of a Roman site at Old Durham, the most solid argument produced is the discovery of coins in ploughing.

That Cade was right, and that Old Durham was in fact a Roman site, if of very different type from what Cade had supposed, is proved by the discovery in 1940 of a Roman building, now to be described, in the very midst of Cade's site. This lies<sup>9</sup> one mile south east of Durham, one third of a mile north of Shincliffe Bridge and a quarter of a mile south of the manor farm of Old Durham, upon whose lands it is situated (p. 2). It occupies a well-defined river terrace, now some 300 yards from the east bank of the river Wear, which has been extensively worked for gravel for some years. Early in 1940 the Durham City Sand and Gravel Company, Ltd. cut a test pit, 4 feet in diameter, with a view to extending their existing quarry towards the north, and happened to strike some masonry. Mr. Jack Hay, of Durham, whose interest in local antiquities is well known, noted this masonry in passing the pit and also observed a layer of white rubble exposed in the face of the quarry. Interested by what he saw, Mr. Hay enlisted the advice of Mr. B. Colgrave and the Rev. Thomas Romans, and during their visit, on 9 April, 1940, to inspect the remains Mr. Romans secured half a Roman roofing tile embedded in the core of the wall. During the next few months the rubble in the quarry face was exposed to weather, and by August, 1941, when Mr. Romans again inspected the site, accompanied by Mr. R. P. Wright, it was evident that the white layer of rubble formed the foundation for a layer of red cement. A little trowel-work soon demonstrated that the red cement was the lining of a small Roman bath.

(ii) *The domestic bath-house* (fig. 2).

With the kind permission of the proprietors (see p. 20)

<sup>9</sup> O.S. 25-inch map Durham XXVII, 6 (ed. 1919), field no. 46; O.S. one-inch map (Popular ed.), 11, square F.10.

# OLD DURHAM

1943

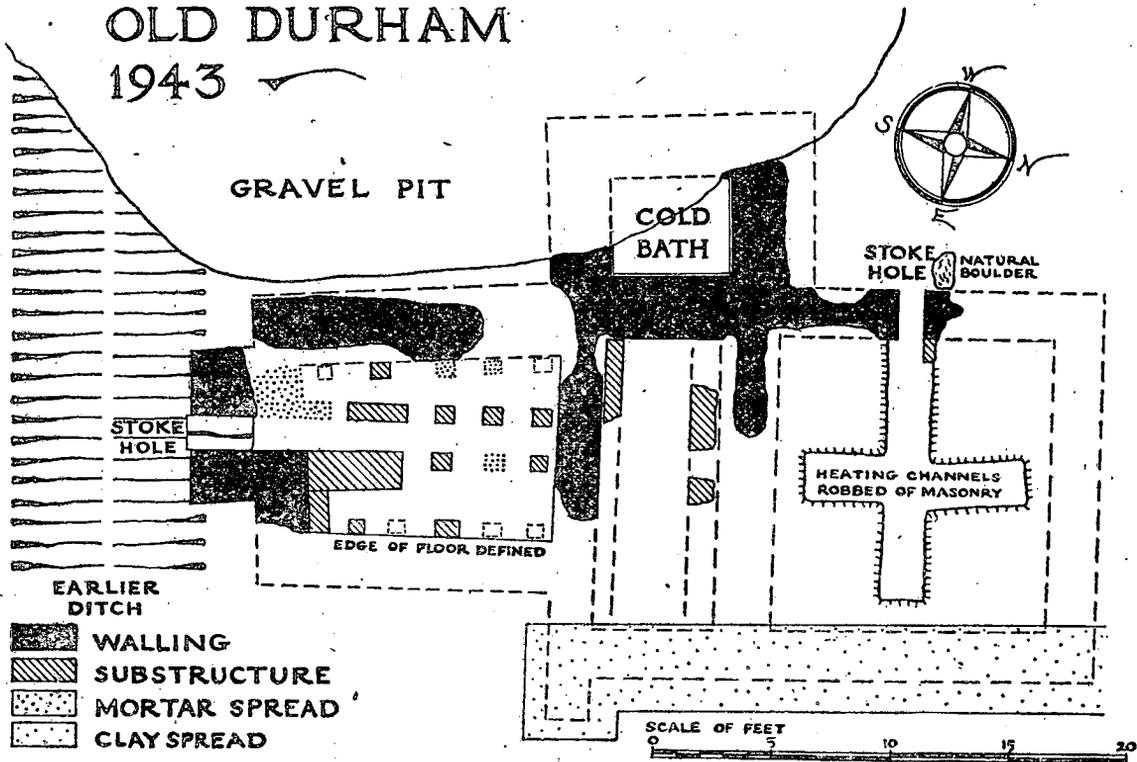


FIG. 2. GROUND PLAN OF BATH-HOUSE AT OLD DURHAM.

excavations<sup>10</sup> were now started; and, though much hampered and inevitably delayed by the preoccupation in war work of all concerned, they were continued sporadically from the autumn of 1941 until the spring of 1943, as time and voluntary helpers were available.

The bath (fig. 2) proved to be a cold bath, measuring<sup>11</sup> 4 feet 10½ inches by 3 feet 11 inches internally and approximately 11 feet by 9 feet externally. The west wall and much of the floor and south wall, 2 feet 8 inches wide, had already fallen into the quarry, but the north west internal corner still survived and an estimated width for the west wall can be calculated from the surviving members. These walls (pl. II A), as throughout the building, were of rubble faced with hammer-dressed sandstone blocks averaging 6 inches by 8 inches on the face. The east wall, 2 feet 6 inches wide, stood two courses high. The north wall was wider, 2 feet 10 inches still remaining despite total removal of the north face. Here was the entrance to the bath, where the extra width is no doubt to provide for one or more steps. The floor of the bath, 14 inches thick, was formed by a four inch layer of broken sandstone, supporting 10 inches of white concrete, including a ⅛-inch layer of pink cement. A cement of pounded tile had also coated the sides of the bath, where it was about ¾ inch thick and still remained in places to a height of 5 inches (pl. II B). The cement was thickened into a watertight joint at the junction of sides and floor, though not so regularly as to be describable as a quarter-round moulding. The floor was covered with earth and fallen rubble, much of it severely burnt, amongst which was one heavily burnt Samian sherd of Dragendorff's type 33, in Lezoux fabric, datable to Hadrian or Antoninus Pius.

<sup>10</sup> The writers make grateful acknowledgement of the assistance given by various friends, including Mr. B. Colgrave and Mr. A. H. A. Hogg, and by several students from St. John's College, Durham, and boys from Durham School. They are also very grateful to Mr. Philip Corder for full notes on the pottery and the accompanying drawings.

<sup>11</sup> When measurements are given, those from north to south precede those from east to west.

Part of a roofing tile was found embedded in the masonry at the south east corner of the cold bath.

The cold bath was entered from a narrow eastward room, measuring 5 feet by 12 feet. Sleeper walls, six inches high, had been added along the north and south faces, to carry a vanished floor. This raised floor, however, was not a hypocaust, and it seems evident that the room served as a combined vestibule and dressing-room, where a raised floor would be free from chilling ground-damp and would dry quickly after being soaked and splashed by bathers emerging from the cold bath.

South of the vestibule lay a pillared hypocaust (pl. 1), diagonal to the cold bath and not quite in the same orientation. It measured 15 feet by 13 feet externally, but was not quite rectangular, the width narrowing down to 12 feet at the south end. From the south wall projected two massive piers of masonry, roughly 3 feet square, between which passed the main flue, 18 inches wide. The projection was evidently intended to support a tank<sup>12</sup> or boiler for heating the water-supply of a laver, douche or small bath, as in the little bath-house at Langton.<sup>13</sup> It is evident that we have here a *caldarium*, or hot room for damp heat. A single flagstone, 27 inches long and cracked by great heat, formed the floor of the furnace, continuous with the lower footing flags of the masonry cheeks, which were laid in mortar on the natural gravel. On these footings stood a second thin slab course and three courses of hammer-dressed sandstone blocks, averaging 10 inches by 6 inches on the face. The cheeks of the furnace had suffered very heavily from fire, and disintegrated within a few days of being exposed. The external face of the main west wall had already fallen down the quarry, but much of the rubble core was left, while 5 feet 8 inches of footing and two stones, offset one inch, survived to fix the position of the inner face. We can thus say that

<sup>12</sup> cf. J. Ward, *Romano-British buildings and earthworks*, 197.

<sup>13</sup> P. Corder and J. L. Kirk, *A Roman villa at Langton, near Malton, East Yorkshire*, 45, fig. 10.

the wall had been approximately 3 feet wide. Most of the north wall remained, but the east wall had been entirely removed by stone-robbers. The edge of the floor of the hypocaust, however, clearly defined the position of the east wall and an approximate width was given by the four-foot foundation trench cut in the gravel subsoil.

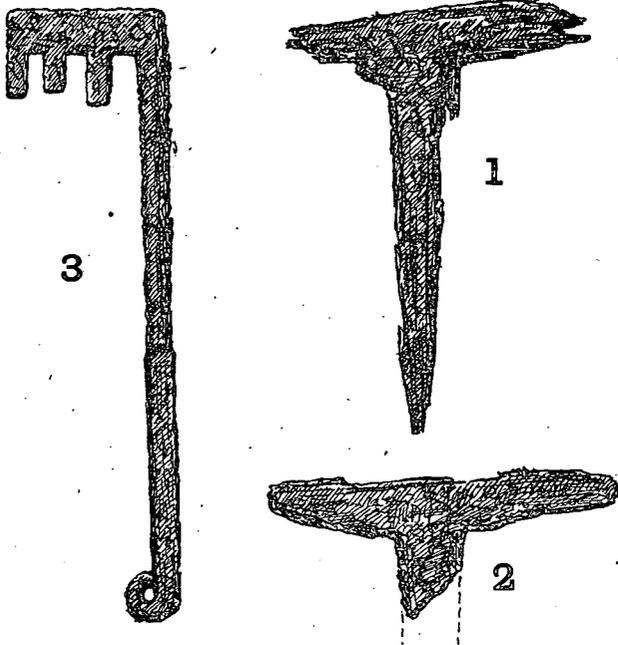


FIG. 3.

The bottom floor of the hypocaust had been carefully laid on 5 inches of sandstone pitching, and was itself composed of a four inch layer of hard lime mortar. The upper floor had been supported on pillars or scarcements. Two pillars of four courses still stood nine inches high, while of two others only one course remained, the rest being traceable from the imprint on the floor or, in one case, from the foundation stone embedded in the floor. The stones com-

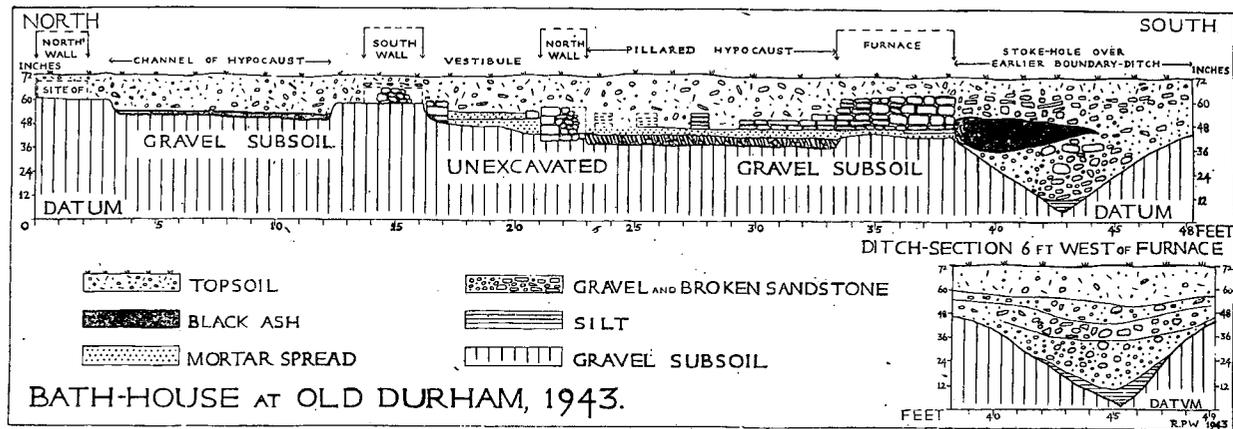


FIG. 4. SECTION OF BATH-HOUSE AT OLD DURHAM.

posing the pillars were set in hard cement,  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch thick; they averaged 9 to 10 inches square and 2 inches thick, and had been carefully trimmed with rounded corners. All were reddened by fire. The draught passage had been extended inwards from the ashlar cheeks of the furnace by long piers built of thin slabs, giving the flue a total length of 9 feet on the east and 9 feet 3 inches on the west, where there is a gap of 9 inches.

The lower floor of the hypocaust was thickly covered with a confused mass of burnt rubble from the walls, portions of the upper cement flooring, and a considerable quantity of wall-plaster. The wall-plaster exhibited curving stems and broad leaves in green on a cream ground, and also red stripes on a cream ground. Two T-shaped holdfasts of iron (fig. 3, nos. 1, 2) found on this floor further suggest that there had been hollow box-tiles to carry the heat up the walls of the room, while two fragments of window-glass attest a glazed window. There was little pottery among the debris, as commonly in bath-houses, merely two or three small fragments of Samian ware, together with fragments of handmade calcite-gritted ware of the fourth century<sup>14</sup> and the wall of a smooth grey straight-sided bowl of the same period. One of the Samian fragments, probably of Dragendorff's type 31, bore part of an illegible stamp, and probably belonged to the second century.

The room to north of the vestibule measured approximately 11 feet 6 inches by 12 feet internally, and its remains were very scanty, as the subsoil lies higher (fig. 4) and most of the foundations had been removed, whether by ploughing or robbery. The southern half of the west wall, however, still remained, and was found to contain the furnace-cheeks of a second hypocaust, represented by a faced channel, 12 inches wide, heavily reddened by fire. A large natural boulder, which happened to lie to north just outside

<sup>14</sup> The calcite-gritted ware unfortunately did not exhibit rim-sections, and cannot therefore be dated more closely.

the gap, had also been heavily burnt by fire raked out from the furnace flue. These rakings of black wood-ash, one foot deep and four feet wide, extended for 12 feet to west of the furnace but produced only one sherd of black ware. There was also a small round ashpit, exposed in the quarry face north west of the stokehole, which yielded a fragment of a lid in handmade fourth century fabric. Within the room, the furnace served a channelled hypocaust, planned as a Latin cross but now reduced to a trench cut in the gravel subsoil (pl. III A). The trench was 2 feet wide and about 12 inches deep and was filled with black ash, which contrasted strongly with the surrounding gravel: Its original lining had disappeared, except for one stone next to the furnace, which indicated that it had been formed of flagstones set on edge, and thus retaining the gravel. The room is thus explicable as a *laconicum* or *sudatorium*, for dry heat, offering an alternative to the damp heat of the *caldarium*. Its floor and north wall had completely disappeared, though the approximate position of this wall can be fixed by the end of the transverse channel. In a corresponding position on the east, where a vein of sand interrupts the gravel subsoil and offers a less stable foundation, there was a thin spread of clay, in places 4 feet wide, no doubt intended to hold the vanished footing-course of the east wall. At the south end of this wall, opposite the south wall of the vestibule, there was a slight expansion; and at the north end patches of clay extended, as was determined after the block of the ground-plan had been made, for about three feet beyond the limit indicated on the plan (fig. 2). It is thus conceivable, though far from certain, that there may have been a buttress at the north east angle of the building. The only relics directly associated with this room were a chip from a hard grey jar, decorated with vertical scoring, and one iron nail, both from the stokehole. The surface soil over the flue produced two fragments of Samian (fig. 5, nos. 2, 3), part of an Antonine dish of Dragendorff's type 36, and a late second-century Samian *mortarium* of

Dragendorff's type 45; also two fragments from a fourth-century *mortarium*. Another surface find was the fragment from the neck of a flagon with frilled rim, of late third-century or early fourth-century type (fig. 6, no. 4).

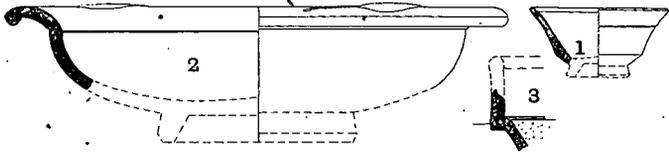


FIG. 5. SAMIAN WARE FROM OLD DURHAM, SCALE 1:4.

The building thus described is undoubtedly a small domestic bath-house, self-contained and erected all at one period. Its two types of hypocaust are complementary, the one for damp heat, the other for dry heat. As Sir George Macdonald<sup>15</sup> has pointed out, it is not a necessary conclusion

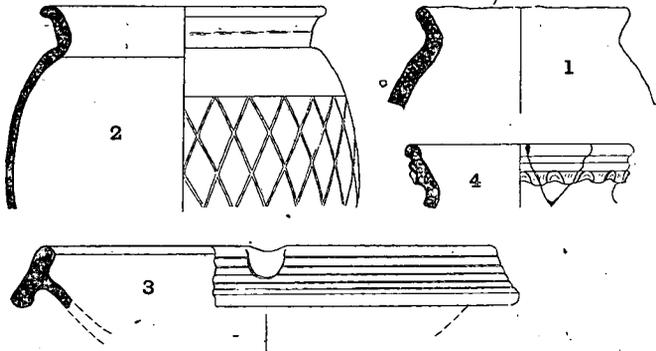


FIG. 6. COARSE WARE FROM OLD DURHAM, SCALE 1:4.

that all *sudatoria* had channelled hypocausts, or that every channelled hypocaust was a *sudatorium*. But here at Old Durham the pillared hypocaust, with its massive furnace, tubulated walls and boiler-stand, indicating the use of the pillared hypocaust as a *caldarium*, and the channelled hypocaust, so carefully divorced from it and thus not serving as a *tepidarium*, or warm room, are so planned

<sup>15</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.* lxxiii, 461.

and designed as to suggest that the two rooms were used alternatively, according as damp or dry heat was desired. To-day, the contrast between the two seems a luxurious provision: but in the Roman North it was a commonplace, since, as Sir George Macdonald<sup>16</sup> has also shown, it was typical of all well equipped military bath-houses. The alternative methods of bathing were in fact widely diffused and appreciated, and their occurrence in a civilian building so deep in the heart of the military area need cause no surprise.

Like many bath-houses, the Old Durham building was apparently detached from other buildings, which have, however, not yet been located. The most likely site for the dwelling house seemed to be the crown of the terrace, in the ploughed field to north, where ploughmen report having hit what they believe to be masonry towards the middle of the field. But a series of trial-pits and careful search of furrows for broken masonry or other relics has so far proved unproductive. Little, however, may now remain of the building, and that little below the reach of the plough. Nevertheless, the immediate isolation of the bath-house from any structures in the field seems proved. A parallel trial-trench cut north of the building, just beyond the farm road which skirts it, proved completely negative; while to east of the pillared hypocaust, two converging trenches, 18 feet long, were also blank. East of the channelled hypocaust, a slight hollow below reach of the plough contained rubble and facing-stones covering an area at least 10 feet by 15 feet square. The stories lay in no regular order and were heavily burnt before reaching that position, so as to show that they are debris from the burnt building. Amid associated soil and wood-ash were found a Roman iron key, 6½ inches long (fig. 3, no. 3), and fragments<sup>17</sup> of a black cooking pot

<sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.* 449.

<sup>17</sup> For the *mortarium*, cf. Simpson, *CW*<sup>2</sup> xiii, Poltross Burn milecastle. pl. v, no. 4; also Richmond, *CW*<sup>2</sup> xxxvii, Bewcastle, fig. 22, nos. 15, 16 (close of third century), fig. 25, no. 47 (A.D. 297-343). The cooking pot is the kind with everted rim and lattice belt.

and a hammer-headed *mortarium* (fig. 6, no. 3), with thumb-depressed spout, neither later than the earlier fourth century. On the south and west the quarry has removed all evidence; and the fact that no relics have been recorded during quarrying must be weighed against the consideration that, if the remains had been already almost completely destroyed by agriculture, they might have been destroyed unnoticed. Our evidence, then, tells us only that the building was isolated on north and east, amid a spread of burnt masonry from its ruined or demolished walls. It should, finally, be added that numerous fragments of early medieval pottery indicate that by about the thirteenth century the burnt ruin served either as a shelter or as a source of building stone.

(iii) *An earlier boundary ditch.*

Examination of the stokehole, south of the furnace of the pillared hypocaust, showed that the deposit of ash overlay an earlier V-shaped ditch (pl. III B), some ten feet wide and four feet deep, running from east to west and virtually at right angles to the long axis of the bath-house, and this is confirmed by a further exposure of the ditch in the quarry face some thirty yards to the west. It is clearly not of military type, for it lacks the usual square channel at the base, and there is no trace of an associated rampart, even in the section thirty yards away from the hypocaust where builders are not likely to have removed it. This is, then, a ditch for drainage or delimitation, of the type now well known to be associated with Romano-British homesteads,<sup>18</sup> as at Langton, Rudston or Ditchley.

A cross-section of the ditch (fig. 4), in line with the axis of the furnace, exhibited six inches of topsoil, covering a 15-inch stratum of tumbled rubble and fragments of dressed stone, for the most part heavily burnt and associated with fragments of mortar, plaster and wood-ash. This layer

<sup>18</sup> For Langton see Corder and Kirk, *op. cit.*, fig. 58; for Rudston see *YAJ* xxxiii, 327; for Ditchley see *Oxoniensia* i, fig. 5.

represents the destruction of the bath-house, in which fire had manifestly played a part (p. 13). Next came a pocket of wood-ash, 18 inches thick at deepest and extending six feet beyond the furnace, in which were mussel-shells and fragments of wall-plaster. This represents rakings from the furnace and rubbish, which included pottery, namely, a fragment from the lower part of the wall of a fourth century *mortarium*, dusted with large black grit and datable to A.D. 300-370, part of the wall of a very hard smooth grey jar of the same period, and several fragments of cooking pots in calcite-gritted ware, certainly not later in date. Now came the ditch-filling proper, averaging  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet deep and comprising clean gravel and sand interspersed with broken dressed stone. The fact that the broken stone is also visible in the exposure thirty yards to the west suggests that when the ditch was filled up, before the erection of the pillared hypocaust, debris from earlier buildings was already strewn about the site. Finally, the silted mud and occasional stones, forming a 15-inch layer at the bottom of the section, produced a Samian rim-herd of Dragendorff's type 33 and large fragments of an Antonine cooking pot (fig. 6, no. 2). A second section (fig. 4), six feet to the west and in line with the west wall of the hypocaust and in other respects similar to the first, except for absence of the stokehole deposit, yielded from the primary silt another fragment of Samian ware (fig. 5, no. 1), again of Dragendorff's shape 33 and of Hadrianic-Antonine date; also a native hand-made cooking pot (fig. 6, no. 1) very heavily coated with soot, which is of crystalline-gritted fabric and of a shape for which parallels suggest a first-century date. Thus, while a foundation date for the ditch is given by the Antonine pottery in its primary silt, the native vessel, apparently of still earlier type, might suggest that the site was not then occupied for the first time,<sup>19</sup> but that romanization, as at

<sup>19</sup> Three or four small flints of Neolithic type were also found, as if the terrace was indeed an old habitation-site. The importance of the native sherd is stressed by Mr. Corder, who compares it with Corder and Kirk, *Langton*, fig. 7, nos. 22, 23, from the early ditch there.

Langton or at Rudston in Yorkshire, was being grafted upon an already existing native settlement.

(iv) *Conclusions.*

Excavation has thus proved<sup>20</sup> the existence at Old Durham of a small Roman bath-house on a site with two periods of occupation, the first marked by a boundary ditch of non-military type, associated with second-century pottery and debris from buildings, the second by an actual building, with which is associated pottery dating from the second century to the fourth.

There is, as has been said, no hint of military occupation. Excavation and careful reconnaissance of the area have revealed no trace of defences, and the site itself is devoid of wide outlook (see pl. III B). Again, the bath-house is not of military type, for it lacks both the spacious *apodyterium*, or undressing room, and the *tepidarium* suited to squads of men; it is, on the contrary, typical of those attached to numerous farmsteads in the civil area of Roman Britain, and can be recognized without hesitation as falling into the domestic category. Domestic considerations, too, offer an immediate explanation for the choice of site. The gravel river terrace, providing a light, well-drained soil in a sheltered valley open to the south, is admirably suited to agriculture, being free from the heavy boulder clay which long hindered the expansion of early man in the North. The land was also well watered, and supplies from spring or well would be available. We may, then, accept the site as non-military and the remains as those of a Romano-British farmstead, the first to be identified in county Durham.

The discovery has the special value attached to all first discoveries, in that it marks a real stage in the advance of knowledge. Hitherto, no Roman domestic establishment had been detected north of Middleham in Wensleydale, and it had been considered that Roman civilized life did not

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Richmond, *Journal of Roman Studies* xxxii (1942), 108; xxxiii (1943), 71.

infiltrate so far into the military area. The new discovery changes the situation. It indicates that by the Antonine period a romanized farmstead was being developed on the banks of the Wear; and, where one such establishment is known, others will have existed, for they rarely occur in isolation. By the fourth century, and probably long before, the estate was provided with domestic amenities entirely in the Roman style. Thus, as in Yorkshire, the local agriculture of county Durham flourished under the ægis of the Roman army, which provided it with a market. At the beginning of the occupation a point of special interest is raised by the pre-Antonine native ware. As noted above, this suggests that when the romanization of the site took place, in the Antonine period, a pre-existing native farm was then being developed and systematized. It is also likely enough in itself that the Antonine date of the romanization is to be associated with historical events. Under Antoninus Pius the frontier was pushed forward from Tyne and Solway to Forth and Clyde, and there may well have occurred a corresponding northward extension of the romanized civil area. But more must be learnt of this and similar sites before the likelihood can be accepted as a general truth. The occupation of the site until well into the fourth century is proved by pottery already described. There is as yet no evidence that the site remained in use after the Pictish and Saxon raids of A.D. 367, but, whether this particular site was occupied later or not, the fact that the civil area is shown to have extended to Weardale explains, for example, the occurrence of hoards<sup>21</sup> of clipped *siliquæ* at Whorlton, Guisborough, Husthwaite and Richmond in the region of the Tees valley, which are dated to the late fourth or early fifth century. For the Tees, bordered by rich agricultural land, can now be seen as the centre rather than the fringe of a prosperous civil area, with a

<sup>21</sup> For the Whorlton hoard see B. H. St. J. O'Neil, *Num. Chron.*<sup>5</sup> xv, 258-9, 272; for Guisborough, Husthwaite and Richmond hoards see O'Neil, *Arch. Jour.* xc, 290, pl. 1, and 302.

central garrison at Piercebridge comparable with that at Malton. County Durham was perhaps less susceptible of extensive development than northern Yorkshire. But it will be borne in mind that the site at Old Durham lies on the magnesian limestone plateau, which extends thence to South Shields and which must have contained, as it still does, many tracts of good agricultural land. That this area has hitherto yielded no Roman domestic buildings is not surprising. It has been heavily and early cultivated. Many structures, so slight when compared with the massive and extensive remains of Roman forts, may have been totally removed by the plough. Old Durham itself narrowly escaped obliteration and its discovery is due to Mr. Hay's intelligent eye, while its interpretation has demanded careful exploration of its shattered and reduced remains. There is thus hope for further discoveries in the county, and room to wish for a better preserved site.

(v) *Notes on the road-system.*

The earlier antiquaries, who first drew attention to the site at Old Durham, specifically associated it with a Roman road. Actually, however, the relation of the site to the Roman roads of county Durham is so obscure that the tangled evidence is worth analysis, if only to stimulate future inquiry and observation.

At Willington the main north road (Dere Street) threw off a branch<sup>22</sup> to the north east, which ran through Brancepeth towards Stone Bridge near Neville's Cross, Durham, and is presumed to have continued on the west side of the Wear to Chester-le-Street. Old Durham lies on the east side of the river, a mile and a half east of this road-line.

A more easterly, alternative north road has, however, been conjectured by Durham antiquaries,<sup>23</sup> leading from

<sup>22</sup> Wright, *Arch. Ael.*<sup>4</sup> xv (1938), 362.

<sup>23</sup> In particular see Cade, *Archæologia* vii (1785), 74, and Longstaffe, *Proc. Archæological Institute*, 1852, *Newcastle*, vol. i, 67, who adds that "a fine gold Nero was found by a woman hoeing turnips on Gilligate Moor about fourteen years ago and is in the possession of the Rev. James Raine." Gillesgate Moor is about half a mile north of Old Durham.

York or Malton by Northallerton, crossing the Tees at Pounteys Bridge (Middleton St. George) and proceeding, by way of a hamlet called Street House, Stainton-le-Street (now Great Stainton), Bradbury and Shincliffe, so as to cross the Wear near Kepier and thus to reach the Roman fort at Chester-le-Street. This line is not without physical difficulties, notably in the passage of the Skerne near Bradbury, and so far has not produced the remains of a Roman metalled road necessary to substantiate its existence. Attention<sup>24</sup> should, nevertheless, be drawn to the two Roman lamps found at Pounteys Bridge, to casual coin-finds at Great Stainton, and to the use of *street* in the name Street House and the medieval forms of Stainton-le-Street. Cade, indeed, was informed that remains of the road could be traced from Old Durham to Kepier, where masonry piers of a bridge on the north side of the Wear, below Kepier Hospital, could be seen. Nor is Cade's discovery unsupported. Surtees<sup>25</sup> confirms his evidence by observing that, in the dry summer of 1827, two bridges were seen in the

<sup>24</sup> For the lamps from Pounteys Bridge, Middleton St. George, see *Proc. Soc. Ant. Newc.*<sup>4</sup> i, 198-9; they were stamped ANNISER and came from digging the cellars of a house called The Friary, in Pounteys Lane. Stainton-le-Street is now called Great Stainton: the earlier form is used in *Registr. Pal. Durham*, A.D. 1311 *Stanton le Strete*, A.D. 1312 *Staynton in Strata* (see Mawer, *Place-names of Northd. and Durham*, p. 187). Coin-finds are referred to in *PSAN*<sup>2</sup> x, 111, where it is stated that "Roman coins have been occasionally found on the spot, the latest being a small one of bronze discovered in the past week or two" (written in September, 1901). The coin is described in detail and is identifiable as Cohen, *Médailles Impérialles*, vii, p. 378, no. 123. The fact that odd coins thus are still being discovered suggests a Roman site, possibly of non-military character. A non-military site is much more strongly suggested by a coin of Severus, not otherwise particularized, from Newton Ketton (*Arch. Ael.*<sup>2</sup> vii, 90), recorded in 1866. Newton Ketton lies under two miles south west of Great Stainton, on the rising ground north of the Skerne, with a south aspect.

<sup>25</sup> For the Kepier bridge, see Cade, *op. cit.*, p. 78. "A gentleman with whom I am acquainted has carefully surveyed the old road from this place by Kepyre hospital and he assures me that, in the dry season, the piers of a bridge are obvious in the bed of the river, seemingly of Roman construction." For the Old Durham bridge, see Surtees, *op. cit.*, p. 91: "During the late dry summer the wooden piers of a bridge over the Wear, leading exactly to the station at Old Durham, were not only visible, but those very piers, left high and dry, were taken up, consisting of long trunks of trees, squared, and bored, and mortized together so as

Wear, one of timber, at Old Durham itself, the other of stone, below Kepier Hospital. Surtees, being unable to quote medieval references to either bridge, inclines to assign both to the Roman period. Here there is room for caution. For Surtees<sup>26</sup> does record the existence of a ford across the Wear opposite Old Durham, and a wooden bridge may have replaced it without record. But a stone bridge is a different proposition. Here the silence of medieval sources is indeed more significant, and it is easier to subscribe so far to Surtees's suggestion, that the Kepier bridge was Roman, as to keep an open mind on the subject until structural evidence appears. The present writers have examined the ground but could find no structural remains anywhere near Kepier. It was, however, hardly to be expected that anything would still be visible in the river bank, where it is so liable to variation, more than a century after the initial discovery. Meanwhile, it is worth while observing that a river crossing below Kepier is one of the few points on this part of the Wear that could have been easily reached by a road from north and south alike.

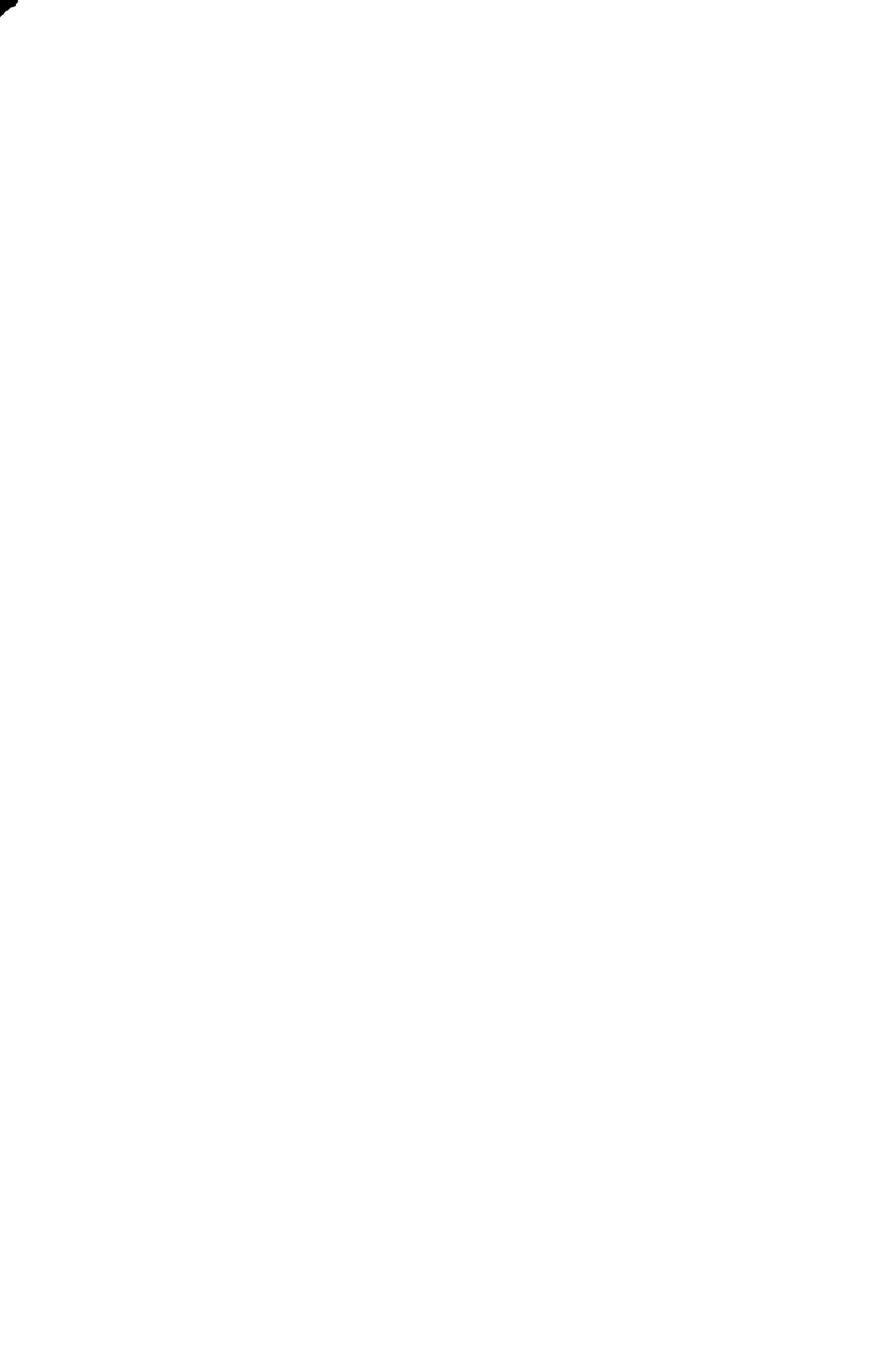
In conclusion, the writers make grateful acknowledgement to Mr. E. A. Coyne and the Durham City Sand and Gravel

to form a strong foundation on each side of the river. At the same time, from the same state of the river, the piers of a bridge of solid masonry, was" [sic] "discovered on the North side of the Wear below Keyper Hospital, confirming, it would seem, the old tradition, that a great road passed this way across the Race-ground, and so by Keyper Northwards. . . ." It should be noted that no great road is likely to have gone from Old Durham to Kepier by the Racecourse, which would mean two crossings of the Wear.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 91. Longstaffe (*loc. cit.*) thinks that the timbers discovered in 1827 near Old Durham ford were not part of a bridge, but were rather to be connected with Scaltock Mill. But Surtees (*loc. cit.* 89) reported the discovery in the same summer of "vestiges of a mill-dam across the Wear, formed by stakes and large stones, a little below Old Durham," and thus distinguished the relics of the mill-dam from those of the bridge. We may thus reasonably accept his conclusion. A useful summary of the writers discussed above is given by the Rev. J. Barmby, *Surtees Soc.* xcv (1896), *Memorials of St. Giles's, Durham*, pp. x-xiv. I. C. Gould, *Vict. County Hist. Durham* i, 354, alluded briefly to Old Durham. Petch, *Arch. Ael.* i (1925), 3, is rightly sceptical of the road in the absence of proof.

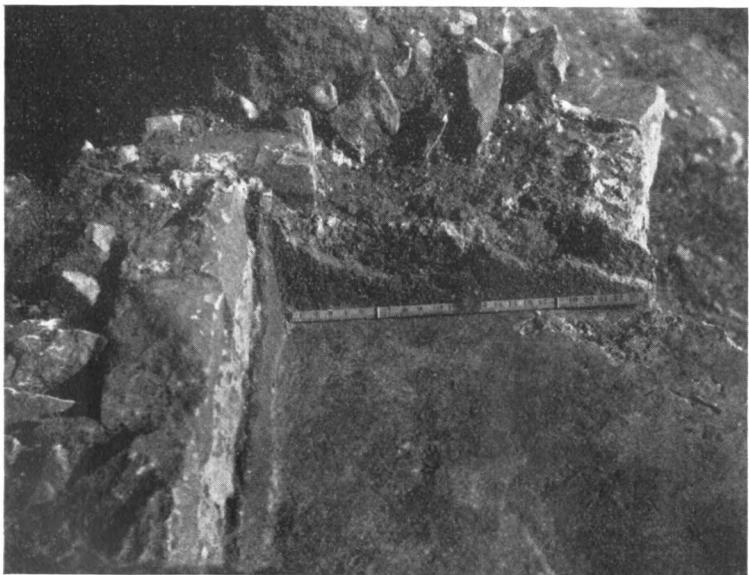


OLD DURHAM: VIEW OF HYPOCAUST.



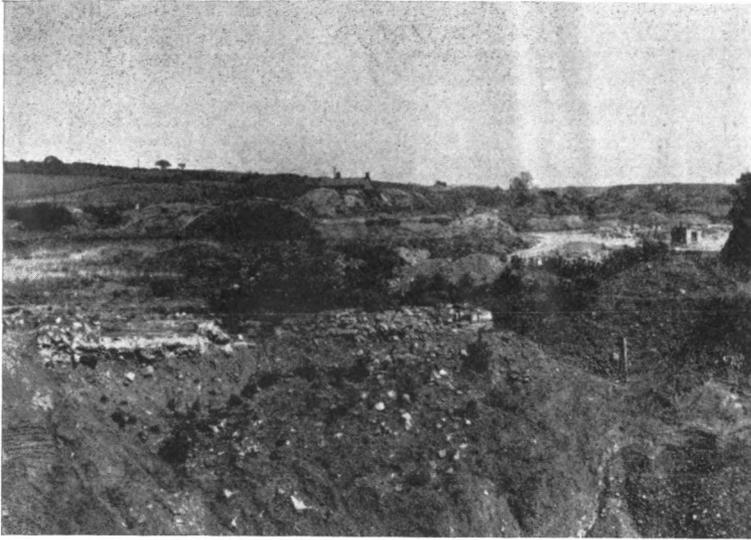


B. OLD DURHAM: EAST WALL AND FLOOR OF COLD BATH.

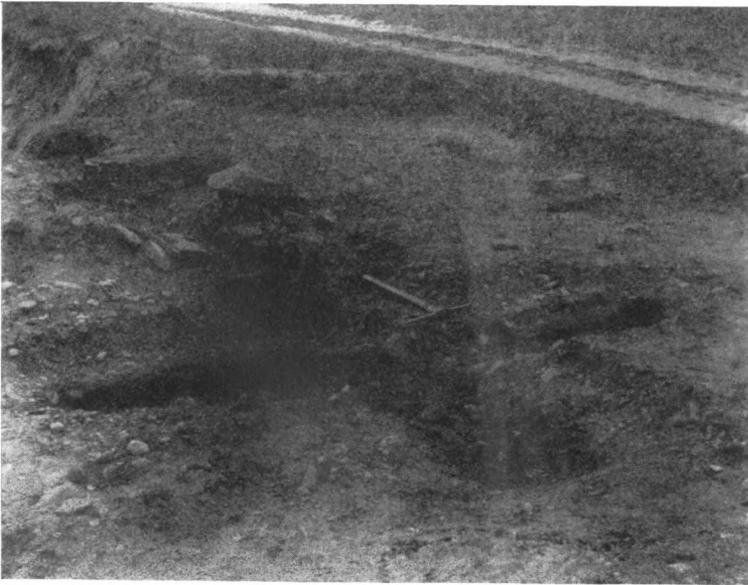


A. OLD DURHAM: DETAIL OF SOUTH EAST CORNER OF COLD BATH, SHOWING CEMENT FINISH.





B. OLD DURHAM: GENERAL VIEW FROM WEST, WITH BATH-BUILDING AND BOUNDARY-DITCH EXPOSED IN THE QUARRY FACE.



A. OLD DURHAM: CRUCIFORM TRENCHES ONCE CONTAINING A CHANNELLED HYPOCAUST, WITH MASONRY OF STOKEHOLE (BEYOND PICK-SHAFT).



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