

1. Introduction and Summary

THE SETTING OF THE FORT

The Roman fort of Newcastle upon Tyne lay at a height of approximately 27m OD on a triangular promontory, now called Castle Garth, bounded by the River Tyne and the deep valleys of the Lort Burn and its tributary (fig. 1.1). Everywhere on Castle Garth where the natural subsoil has been reached, this has proved to be boulder clay. The sides of the promontory are steep and unstable; there is evidence of at least one landslip in the early post-Roman period (see Part 12 of this paper) and several in later periods. The course of the Lort Burn is now covered by the modern Dean Street and its tributary by the small street called The Side. In the Roman period the river probably ran close to the base of the steep scarp at the southern edge of the promontory. Roman period riverside deposits have been found at the base of Castle Stairs (Passmore *et al.* 1991); these stairs appear to have been constructed in a natural hollow or gully (Harbottle 1971, 6–7). It is likely that there was also a valley or water course to the west, along the line now taken by the Long Stairs (see p. 7). The limits of the promontory allow for a small sub-rectangular fort of approximately 0.9ha (1.8 acres); the plan of the fort is also discussed in Paper II (pp. 272–4).

Fig 1.2 shows the excavated portions of the Roman fort. The remains excavated by the Newcastle City Archaeological Unit in the period 1976–92 include parts of the *principia*, the *praetorium* and the street in front of them, two granaries, small buildings in the north-east area of the fort, lengths of the *via praetoria* and other streets, parts of the northern fort wall and *intervallum* street, and extra-mural features beyond the north wall. These remains were found in nine excavation trenches, separated from each other by the standing structures now occupying Castle Garth.

Other trenches excavated on the promontory have also revealed Roman remains. In 1929 F. G. Simpson discovered buildings to the south of the *principia*; his results (Spain and Simpson 1930, 503–5) are incorporated into this report and discussed in Paper II. Also included in this report are the results of excavations by Tyne and Wear Museums at the Bridge Hotel in 1995–6, which revealed part of the southern *intervallum* street and timber buildings.

Roman remains already published and not included in this report comprise part of the north-west end of the *via praetoria* (Harbottle 1974, 63–8) and an area of large flag stones at the southern edge of the promontory (Harbottle 1966, 8, figs 2–6).

The standing remains of the medieval castle comprise the Keep, the Black Gate, and sectors of the northern and southern curtain wall; the Keep and Black Gate are separated by a nineteenth-century railway viaduct. The remainder of Castle Garth is occupied by nineteenth- and twentieth-century buildings, the Moot Hall, the Vermont Hotel (the former County Council building) and the Bridge Hotel, with modern roads and car park. During the construction of the Moot Hall in 1810, Roman finds were made, including two altars (D and E on fig. 1.1) and part of the shaft of a Corinthian pillar (Hodgson 1840, 173). An altar to Jupiter Optimus Maximus (C on fig. 1.1) was also found in this area (Spain 1933, 109–10).

The Roman bridge, the *Pons Aelius*, crossed the Tyne somewhere near the promontory, although its exact location is unknown (Bidwell and Holbrook 1989, 99–100). To the north of the promontory lay Hadrian's Wall; its course in this part of Newcastle is discussed in Paper II (pp. 260–2).

The existence of a cemetery and *vicus* is indicated by discoveries of Roman finds to the west of the fort (described in Spain and Simpson

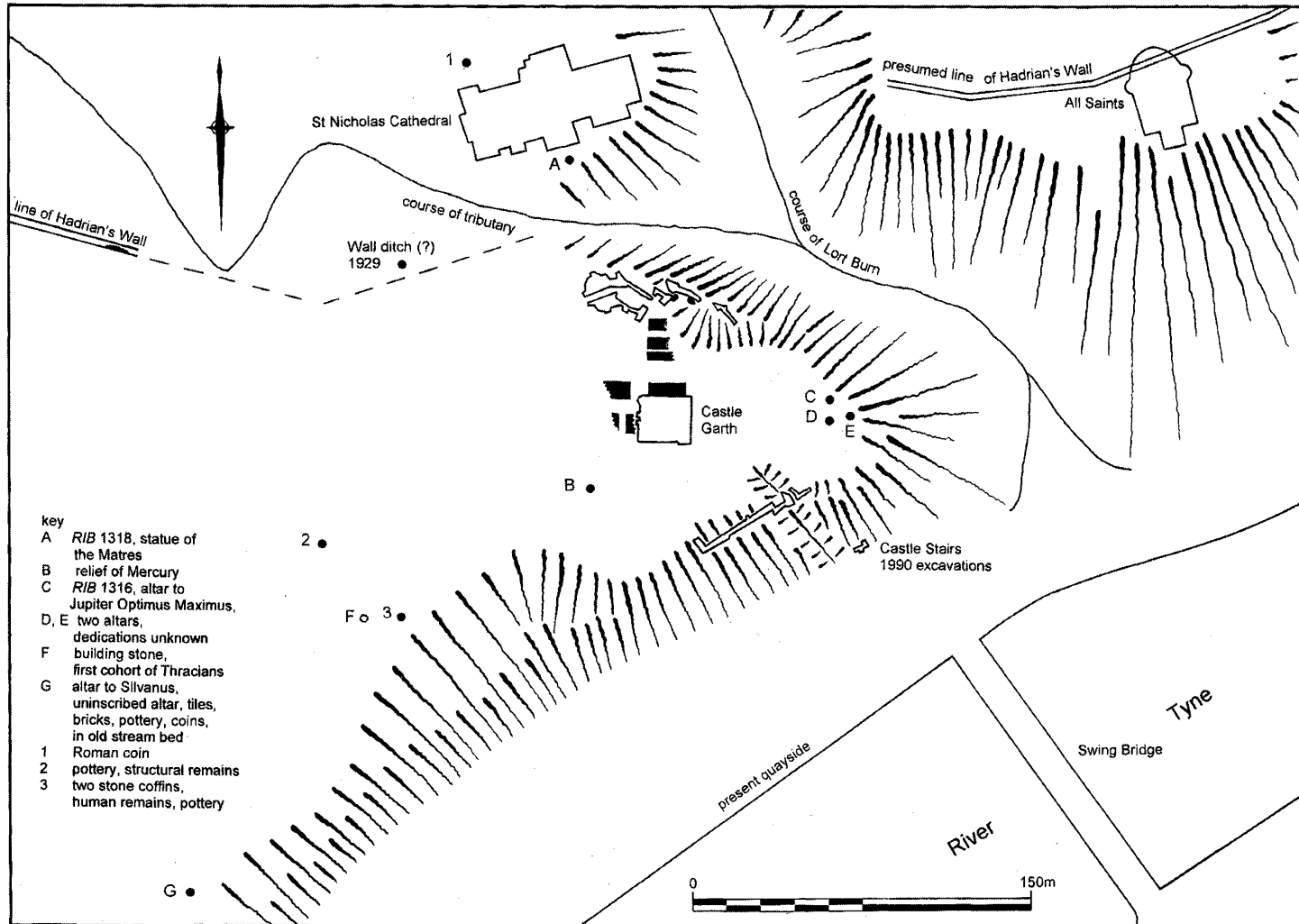


Fig. 1.1 The Roman fort on the Castle Garth promontory (excavated Roman buildings shown in black). The Lort Burn and its tributary are now hidden beneath modern streets; their course is based on antiquarian records. The scarps are based on modern contours; it is assumed that in the Roman period the river ran at the foot of the promontory. Also shown is the line of Hadrian's Wall and the location of Roman finds (open circle indicates estimated location). Also shown are the standing remains of the Castle, and other structures referred to in the text. Scale 1:3000.

1930, 506–7; Graves and Heslop, forthcoming). The finds are few in number, but this may be explained by the fact that they were preserved in infilled valleys, while other remains on higher ground were terraced away in this densely populated part of the city. The group of finds including an altar to Silvanus (G on fig. 1.1) were found in an old stream bed (Richardson 1844, 148–9). Another group (F, 2 and 3 on fig. 1.1) were found in the area of Clavering Place, to the north of Tuthill Stairs (White 1865, 231–2; Rich 1904, 95–6; Harbottle 1968, 178–9). The excavations by F. W. Rich also revealed a culverted stream and a small dene which had been filled in.

THE CONSTRUCTION DATE OF THE FORT AND THE UNITS IN OCCUPATION

The fort was constructed in the late second or early third century. The evidence is set out in Part 15, pp. 166–9 and there is further discussion in Paper II, p. 253.

A full discussion of the units occupying the fort is also found in Paper II, pp. 263–4, but some important points should be mentioned here. An inscription to the Empress Julia Domna (see Part 13), dated to 213, names a unit whose honorific titles indicate its distinction, the *cohors I Ulpia Traiana Cugernorum civium Romanorum*. However, there was a change of unit by the late fourth century, as the *Notitia Dignitatum* (Oc. XL, 43) names the *cohors I Cornoviorum*.

THE PHASING OF THE SITE

The sequence of events described in this report covers seven main periods. These range from activity pre-dating the construction of the Roman fort in the late second or early third century, to events which now can be identified as belonging an early period of Anglo-Saxon occupation of the site, pre-dating the extensive Anglo-Saxon cemetery. These are as follows:
 Period 1. Pre-fort ploughing – ardmarks

- Period 2. Pre-fort agriculture – narrow rigg and furrow
- Period 3. Construction debris (from Roman building work in the vicinity)
- Period 4. Ditches and gullies
- Period 5. The Roman fort
- Period 6. Post-Roman abandonment and decay
- Period 7. Earliest Anglo-Saxon activity, pre-dating the Anglo-Saxon cemetery

Pre-fort activity

The first four of these periods cannot be precisely dated, but some general comments can be made. The early rigg and furrow is not on the same alignment as Hadrian's Wall or that of the fort. It is clear that the Period 3 Roman building activity followed immediately after Period 2, because the furrows were filled with construction debris. It is not possible to say what building work this debris represents. However, it is possible it took place a considerable time before the construction of the fort. The ditches and gullies of Period 4 were possibly agricultural in function, but it may be significant that they were on the same alignments later taken by the buildings of the fort.

The Roman fort

The ditches and gullies were filled in and the site levelled prior to construction of the fort. The primary layout is shown on fig. 1.3, some buildings being immediately preceded by groups of hearths.

The buildings and streets all underwent modifications during the lifetime of the fort. Each excavation trench produced coins and pottery which provided some dating evidence for the individual building or features within that trench. However, the dislocations separating each trench means that it is not possible to tie in changes from one area to another across the site as a whole. The best that can be done is to define three broad phases of modifications, in the third century, the late third to early fourth and the second half of the fourth. For each of the phases described below, the changes

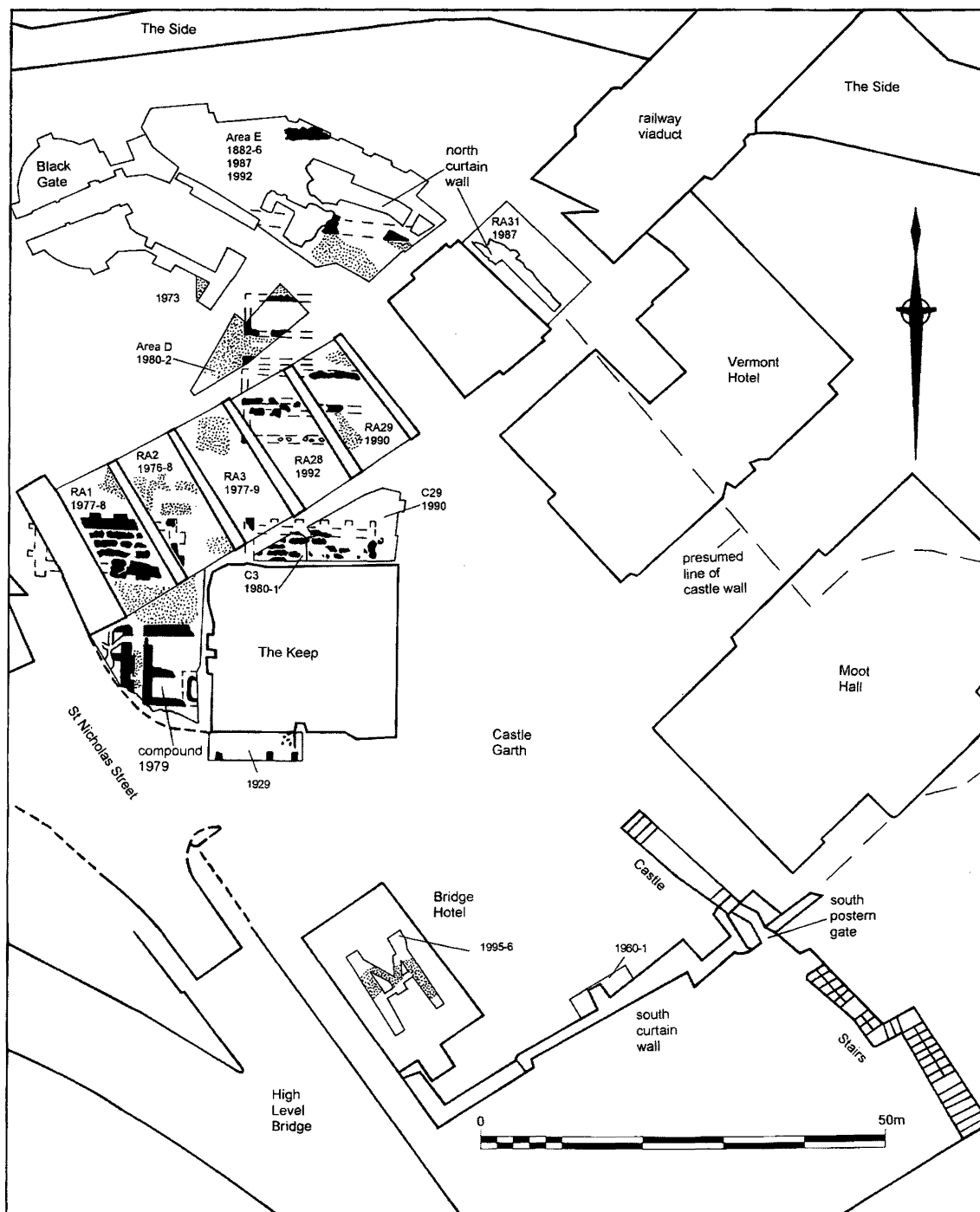


Fig. 1.2 The location of excavation trenches on Castle Garth, with the date of excavation of each trench and a trench name or number where appropriate (Railway Arch is abbreviated to RA). Roman masonry is shown in black, street surfaces stippled. Scale 1:800.

need not have been contemporary, and not necessarily related to each other.

Modifications of the third century

- a hypocausted structure, a probable *schola*, was built to the south of the *principia*
- there were minor changes to the southerly of the two buildings in the north-east (Building II)
- a drain was added at the northern defences
- metalworking hearths were in use in the northern extra-mural area

Modifications of the late third century or later (fig. 1.4)

- Building II was replaced by Building III and Building IV was constructed to the south; the *via praetoria* was resurfaced at the same time
- the hypocaust in the rear range of *principia* went out of use
- there was a change of use of the east granary; the underfloor spaces were filled in
- in the extra-mural area metalworking hearths went out of use
- the southern intervallum street was remetalled, and timber buildings replaced

Modifications of the second quarter of the fourth century (fig. 1.5)

- the *principia* north wall was rebuilt in the 330s or later
- there were two phases of rebuilding in the *praetorium* (the first dated in the 330s or later, the second undated)
- there was a second and third metalling of the street in front of the central range buildings
- the loading bay of the east granary was robbed in the fourth century
- the southern intervallum street was remetalled

Modifications of the second half of the fourth century (fig. 1.6)

- roadside drains were robbed, and the streets were resurfaced with metalling including large blocks and re-used stones

- the *via praetoria* and the street in front of the *principia* may have been used for commercial activity such as a market
- a new mortar floor was laid in the *principia* cross hall in the 360s or later; it was then robbed; there was a period of abandonment, then a re-occupation with a new floor in the cross hall, after 388–95
- there was a change of use of the west granary, its underfloor spaces infilled, and the building used for industrial activity

Decay and collapse, Anglo-Saxon activity pre-dating cemetery (fig. 1.6)

- collapsed buildings were levelled
- a substantial drain was constructed through the remains of the west granary and *praetorium*; a water tank was surrounded by large stone blocks
- a north/south alignment of post holes was cut through the remains of the buildings in the north-east area
- the northern fort wall was demolished; paving of two phases was laid over the remains
- similar paving of two phases was laid down in the extra-mural area
- a gully was cut in the extra-mural area; it was filled up, then post-dated by a ditch terminal and counterscarp bank

NOTES ON THE RECORDING SYSTEM

Areas: The numbering of the excavation trenches beneath the railway viaduct was based on a numbering system assigned to the railway arches, *i.e.* Railway Arch 1, Railway Arch 28. In this report these have been abbreviated to RA1, RA28 etc. In the years 1976–81, each excavation area was assigned a context numbering system beginning at one. These areas were beneath Railway Arches 1, 2 and 3, in the part of 'Area C' adjacent to Railway Arch 3, and in the 'Compound'. To avoid confusion, context numbers in each of these areas have the suffix R1, R2, R3, C3 and C respectively.

Context numbers: Where a context was allocated several numbers at the time of excavation,

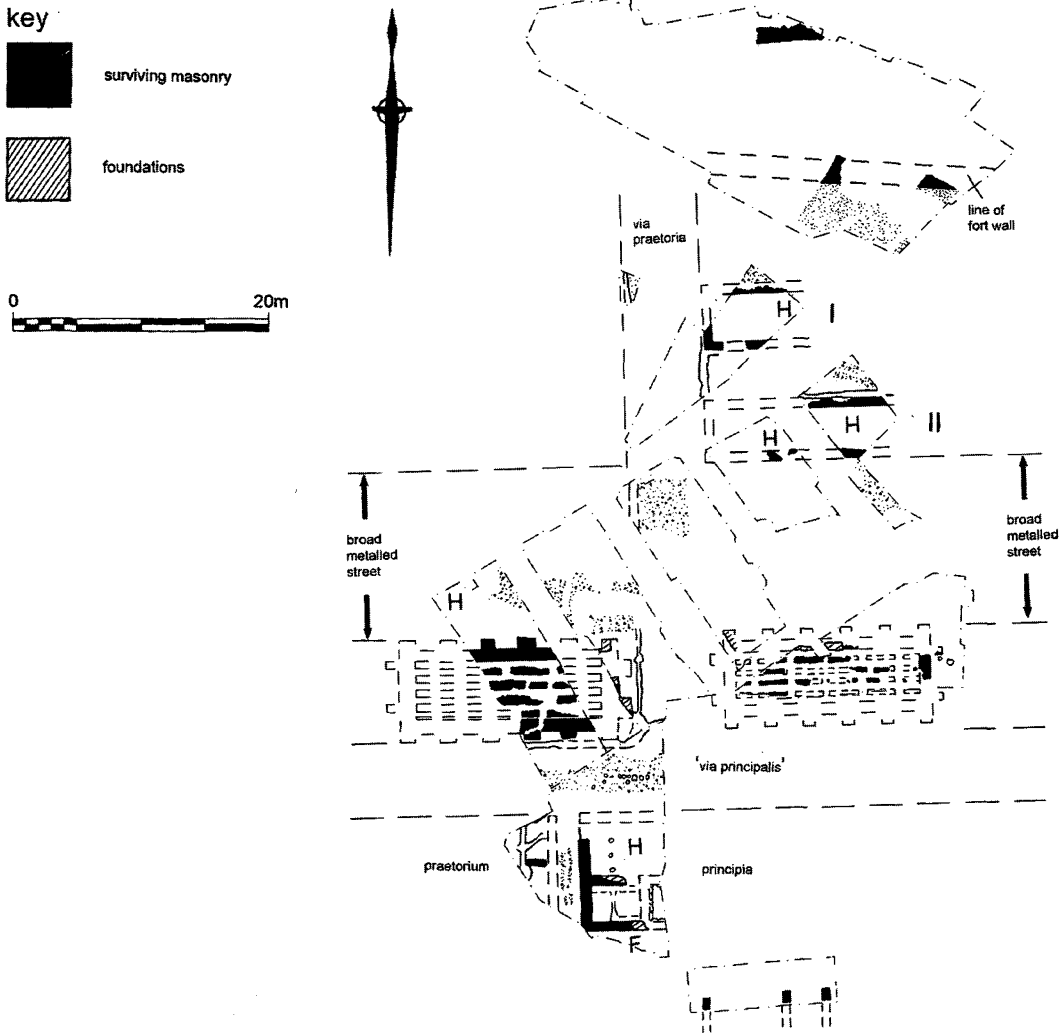
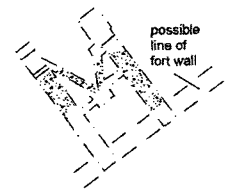


Fig. 1.3 The excavated remains of the primary fort. 'H' denotes hearths pre-dating construction of the primary buildings. 'F' denotes the probable position of a furnace for a channel hypocaust. To the north-east are Buildings I and II. North/south buildings to the rear of the principia were excavated by F. G. Simpson in 1929. Excavations by Tyne and Wear Museums in 1995-6 revealed part of the southern intervallum street and timber buildings. Scale 1:600.



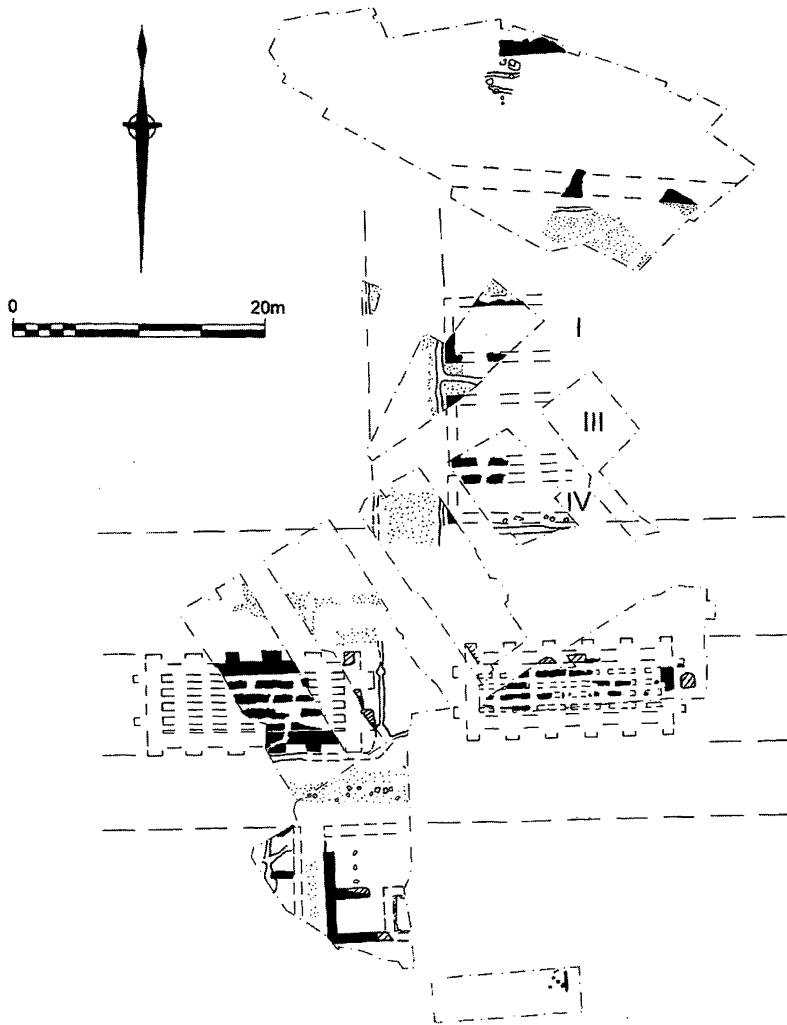


Fig. 1.4 The fort at the end of the third century. Building II was replaced (by Building III) and Building IV built to the south; the via praetoria was resurfaced. A building with a hypocaust raised on pilae was constructed to the south of the principia in the third century. In the late third century the hypocaust in the rear range of the principia went out of use. The southern intervallum street was remetalled and there were timber buildings. Metalworking hearths, in use in the extra-mural area in the third century, went out of use by the mid-to late third. Key as on fig. 1.3. Scale 1:600.



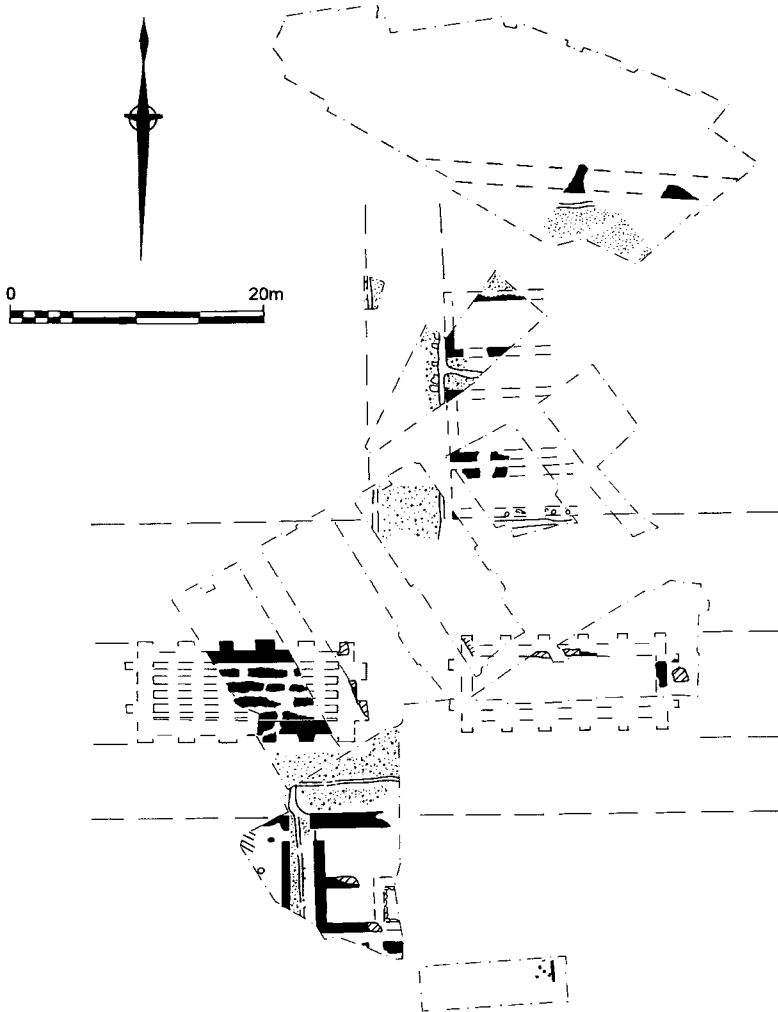


Fig. 1.5 Modifications of the second quarter of the fourth century. The north wall of the principia was rebuilt. The east wall of the praetorium was rebuilt twice; there were also two phases of changes to the hypocaust. At the end of the third century or later there had been a change of use of the east granary; the underfloor spaces were infilled. Key as on fig. 1.3. Scale 1:600.



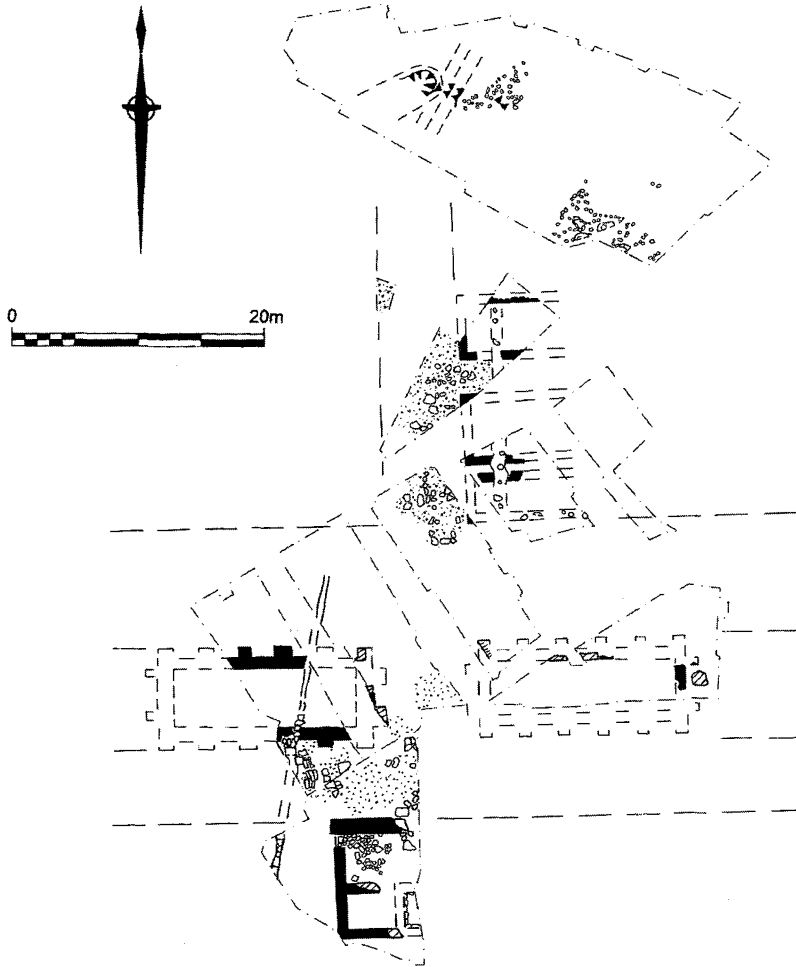


Fig. 1.6 In the second half of the fourth century the 'via principalis' and via praetoria were resurfaced; included in these surfaces were many large blocks, some re-used architectural fragments. In the principia the cross hall floor was renewed, then robbed, and the room was disused until it was refloored with large flag stones some time after 388–95. The underfloor spaces of the west granary were infilled in the second half of the fourth century. The earliest Anglo-Saxon activity comprised the levelling of ruined buildings, the construction of a drain and water tank and an alignment of timber posts. The northern fort wall was demolished and paved over; further paving was laid to the north. The northern defences were replaced by a ditch; a counterscarp bank (not on plan) overlay the fill of a fourth-century gully. Key as on fig. 1.3. Scale 1:600.

the general practice in this report has been to use the first in numerical order to stand for the others. However, in a few cases the number most commonly used or given particular emphasis in the site archive has been preferred. In a few cases, it has been necessary to cite two context numbers for the same feature; in these

cases the suffix is only used once, *i.e.* 194/179R1. Contexts cited in the text but not illustrated are marked with an asterisk.

Finds: In the years 1976–87 all finds and pottery sherds were assigned a 'Finds Code', comprising the year of excavation, followed by two

letters, *e.g.* 79HZ. In this account the codes are cited in brackets, following the context number. In the various finds reports, each find is identified by its catalogue number, excavation area, Period, context number (and finds code where applicable) and the small finds number if applicable.

Some of the results of the study of animal bones from Roman and Anglo-Saxon deposits are cited in this account, but the full report on the animal bones will be included in a subsequent publication.