

### 3. The *Principia*

#### INTRODUCTION

(FIGS. 3.1–3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 14.3 AND PAPER II, FIGS. 4 AND 5)

The remains of the central range of fort buildings at Newcastle which were excavated in 1979 consisted of the western half of the headquarters building, a small part of the commanding officer's house to the west, an alley between the two buildings, and part of the street fronting the central range (fig. 3.1). A street in this position is conventionally referred to as the *via principalis*, but changes in fort plans in the later Roman period render the use of this Latin term questionable for later Roman forts (see Paper II, p. 265). Therefore in this report quotation marks are used when referring to the '*via principalis*'. In 1929 F. G. Simpson found the remains of buildings to the south of the *principia*; the phasing of these is included in the following account, and their significance is discussed more fully in Paper II, pp. 265–9. The surviving remains of the *praetorium* are described in Part 4 of this paper. Part 5 of this paper contains a description of the alley between the *principia* and *praetorium* and streets in the vicinity. The decay and collapse of these buildings in the post-Roman period and activities of the earliest Anglo-Saxon occupation are discussed in Part 12.

The *principia* of the fort at Newcastle was stone-built and consisted of cross hall and rear range only. The whole plan of the building was not recovered as the eastern side had been destroyed by the construction of the Castle Keep; but because the building lay on the central axis of the *via praetoria*, its plan can be confidently restored. The surviving remains (figs. 3.1, 3.3, 3.6 and 3.7) consisted of the western part of the cross hall, an office at the western end of the rear range and the western side of a very deep sunken strong room. The *aedes* would have been positioned above the strong room, and presumably there would have

been another office at the eastern side of the rear range. There was a timber tribunal at the western end of the cross hall; beside it was a doorway opening onto an alley between the *principia* and *praetorium*.

It is difficult to determine whether the *principia* belonged to the primary fort or was a later addition. The strongest evidence comes from the relationship between the north wall of the *principia* and the east/west pre-fort ditch (447C, see Part 2). This wall overlay the southern edge of the ditch, and the builders had taken measures to guard against subsidence by making a cut into the upper ditch fill and inserting a deep cobble raft. The fact that the builders were aware of the existence of the ditch, which was filled in immediately prior to the construction of the fort, suggests that the *principia* was primary. The building overlay the truncated remains of hearths and post holes (fig. 3.2), but there were no datable finds. The simplest interpretation is that they represent short-lived pre-construction features underlying a primary *principia*, like the hearths beneath the buildings in the north-eastern part of the fort (see Part 7).

There is evidence of possible replanning during the layout of the building. Above the cobble raft for the north wall was a trench filled with cobble foundations (444C), but the line of the wall itself was a little to the south (fig. 3.3). To the south of the rear wall of the building was a further length of cobble foundations (241C). This was too close to the *principia* to have been part of a contemporary building; in addition, its north-eastern corner was cut by the construction trench for the strong room (fig. 3.3). Possibly it represents an abandoned attempt to lay out the rear wall, which was then built a little further to the north. The small group of pottery from the fill of the strong room construction trench does not include any sherds later than those found in primary construction layers elsewhere. On this basis it is assumed

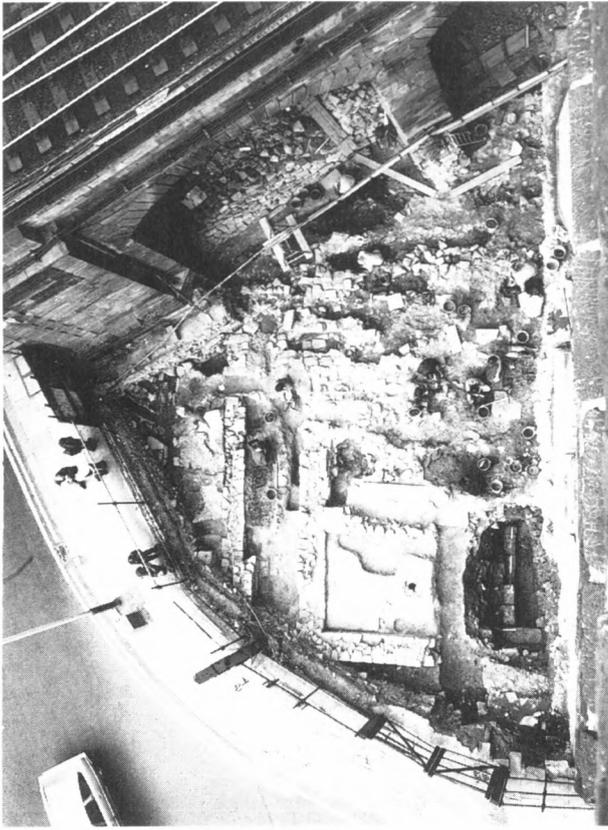


Fig. 3.1 Photograph taken from the Castle Keep, showing excavation in progress in the compound area. The *principia* cross hall north wall and the 'via principalis' are still largely covered by post-Roman deposits and cut by Anglo-Saxon graves. The robber trench for the strong room can be seen as a large semi-circular pit; a shallow extension of the robber trench lies immediately to the north, under the buckets, awaiting excavation. The trench for a post-medieval drain can be seen running north/south, cutting the eastern edge of the rear range office and the western edge of the construction trench and robber trench for the strong room. A branch of the same drain running west-north-west cuts the north wall of the rear range room. Three phases of the *praetorium* are visible. See also frontispiece.

that the strong room was primary rather than a later insertion.

Whatever the precise construction date of the *principia*, it is clear that it was in existence by A.D. 213, when a dedication was set up expressing loyalty to the Dowager Empress Julia Domna (Daniels and Harbottle 1980; and see Part 14 of this paper for the text of the inscription).

Several modifications were made to the *principia*. The hypocaust in the south-western room was demolished and a new floor laid; pottery evidence dates this to the third century or later. It is likely that, in spite of measures taken to prevent subsidence, the north wall did eventually subside into the fill of the early ditch, and that some or all of it was rebuilt on new foundations (fig. 3.7). A coin from the foundations dates this rebuild to the 330s. The cross hall

was provided with a new flagged floor; this was associated with coins of the 340s and a sherd of pottery of the 360s.

Excavation by F. G. Simpson in 1929 revealed buildings to the south of the *principia* (Paper II, figs. 4 and 5). The earlier phase, presumably primary, consisted of narrow buildings aligned north/south. These were replaced by a building equipped with a hypocaust, the *pilae* of which closely resembled those in the final phase of the *praetorium* in the mid-fourth century.

There were clearly defined and significant changes to the *principia* at the end of the Roman period. The coin evidence suggests that in the second half of the fourth century all floor surfaces in the *principia* were robbed, leaving only traces of make up layers and a few isolated flags. A subsequent period of abandonment is

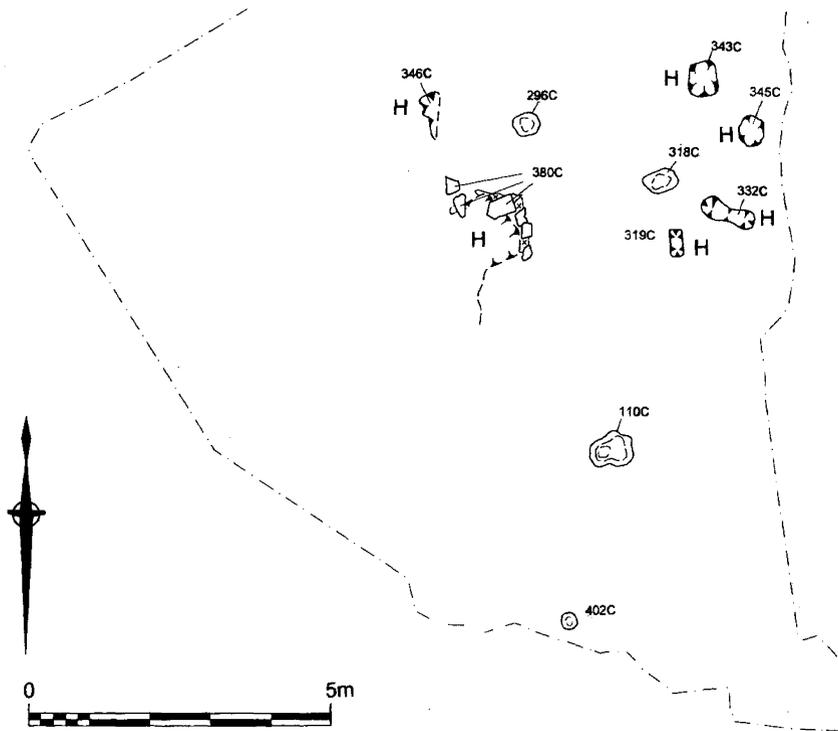


Fig. 3.2 Hearths and post holes pre-dating construction of the principia. Scale 1:125.

indicated by an accumulation of dark loamy soil covering at least part of the cross hall. This contained several fourth century coins, the latest dating to 388–95.

This was followed by a period of late Roman re-occupation. The floor of the cross hall was raised by covering the soil accumulation with a clay levelling layer, then covered by a well-constructed flagged floor (fig. 3.8) which incorporated re-used architectural stones (fig. 14.3, no. 1). A probable floor was laid in the rear range office. Deposits of ash, burnt wood and occupation material over both floors was contexted as occupation material. It may be at this stage that the inscription to Julia Domna was broken up to be used as a threshold. The surviving fragment of inscription was found on the street immediately outside the entrance to the building.

The collapse or robbing of the *principia* itself was indicated by layers of tumble which

included facing stones. The latest period is represented by the robbing of the large blocks lining the strong room. The fill of the strong room robbing pit was cut by Anglo-Saxon graves.

#### PRE-CONSTRUCTION LEVELLING AND HEARTHES

(FIG. 3.2)

##### Levelling

At the southern end of the excavation area there were clay levelling layers (416C\*, 404C\* and 246C\*) and a stony lens (403C\*). In the area later occupied by the rear range of the *principia* there was also a clay layer (102C\*). If any levelling layers were deposited immediately to the north, they are likely to have been truncated either for the construction of the *principia* cross hall, or during a later reflagging.

### Hearths and post holes

Beneath the area later occupied by the cross hall was a large group of features. Much of a large hearth or oven had been removed during excavations by F. G. Simpson in 1929. The remains consisted of a rectangular cut lined with yellow clay (371C\*) in which were several layers of fill. The lowest was a mixed loam with mortar (271C\*), which was overlain by black gritty clay (381C\*), then large flat stones (380C), covered by red/brown clay (307C\*). On excavation the feature was seen to run under the wall of the *principia*. There is some evidence to suggest the purpose of the hearth; it was cut by a post hole (284C) belonging to the primary phase of the *principia* (see below), the fill of which contained slag from metal-working, probably derived from the hearth.

Within the same area were the probable remains of five other hearths (343C, containing ash, 342C\*, and clay, 341C\*), (345C, filled with ash, 344C\*, 328C\*), (332C, filled with burnt sand, 304C\* and clay, 323C\*), (319C) and (346C). These were all heavily truncated and survived only as shallow features. Also in the area was a post hole (296C) and a scoop (318C). There were patches of silt, clay or sand overlying the fills of some of these features (350C\* and other contexts cited in the archive).

In the area later occupied by the *principia* rear range, the levelling layer (102C\*) was cut by a post hole (110C). The fill (109C\*) was overlain by a large area of charcoal and dark clay (103C\*) containing small cobbles and lumps of burnt clay. This may possibly be the remains of a hearth. Cutting a clay levelling layer (246C\*) at the southern limit of excavation was a post hole (402C); the packing stones and fill were overlain by clay (245C\*). In the extreme south-east corner of the excavation trench was a deposit described as 'a layer of burning, possibly an occupation layer' (415C\*).

### Finds

#### Dating evidence – pottery

The pottery from the levelling layers consists mainly of grey wares, but there are a few sherds of BB2,

including a cooking pot and two sherds from a bowl or dish (fig. 15.4, no. 9) (contexts: 102C\* (79HZ), 415C\* (79MB) and 246C\* (79LG)). The silt (350C\* (79KC)) contained a single body sherd of a cooking pot in a SENK fabric.

### CONSTRUCTION OF *PRINCIPIA* (FIGS. 3.1, 3.3, 3.4A AND B, 3.5A AND B, 3.6, 3.7 AND 3.8)

**Walls:** The northern wall of the *principia* overlay the southern edge of the infilled east/west Period 4 ditch (447C). The existence of the ditch must have been known since a cut was made into the upper ditch fill and a 0.80m deep make up of cobbles (440C\*) was inserted as a preparation. A line of cobble foundations (444C) was laid; it was drawn as a sketch section in the context book, and the outline of part of the construction trench was drawn on a field plan (not reproduced here). The line taken by the primary wall is unknown, as nothing of it remained. It seems likely that the measures taken to combat subsidence were insufficient, as the wall was rebuilt in the second quarter of the fourth century (see below).

The west wall, rear wall and central wall between the cross hall and rear range were of one build (fig. 3.3). The foundation trench for the rear wall and west wall (108C\*) was filled with clay and cobbles (120C\*). The walls were of sandstone blocks bonded with yellow mortar. The west wall (5C) was comparatively well preserved; there was a doorway at the northern end, with a sill stone still *in situ*. There was a stake hole (358C) close to the doorway.

The construction trench (313C\*) for the central wall between the cross hall and the rear range was filled with yellow clay (52C) and other deposits (314C\*, 315C\*, 316C\*). The north-eastern part of this wall (54C) was truncated by a branch of a post-medieval drain (4C), but the square end of the construction trench indicates that this wall had only ever been 2.20m in length and the space beyond it was probably a doorway.

At the eastern end of the rear wall (73C), nearest to the strong room, only the foundations survived, the wall having been destroyed

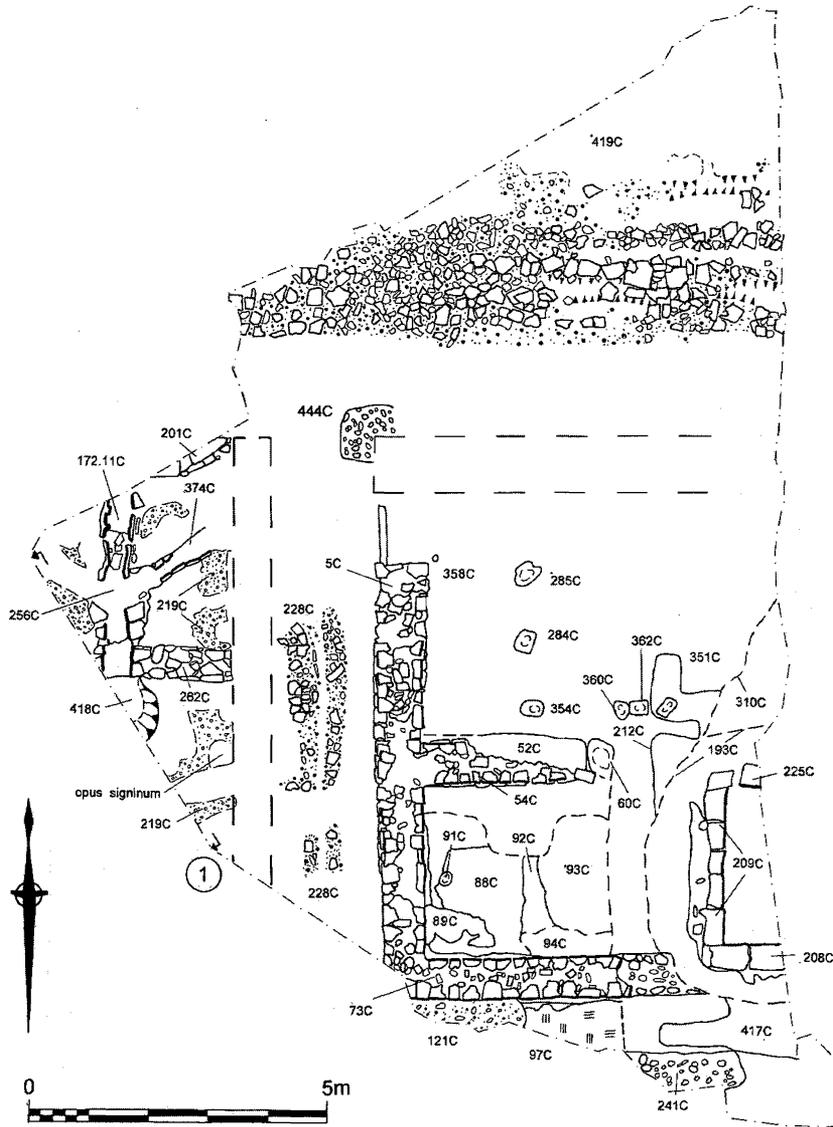


Fig. 3.3 The primary principia, praetorium and alley between them, with part of the primary 'via principalis'. Section 1 is reproduced as fig. 2.3. Scale 1:125.

by the post-medieval drain (4C) (fig. 3.1). It is possible there was some change of plan during the layout of the rear range. The evidence for this comes from a construction trench for a cobble foundation (241C), running east/west, to the south of the rear wall and cutting the clay levelling layer (246C\*). Its full width is

unknown because the southern edge ran into the baulk; the length lying within the excavation trench was c. 1.80m. The eastern end terminated in a straight edge, the north-east corner of which was cut by the construction trench for the sunken strong room. Possibly this foundation represents an abandoned

attempt to lay out the rear wall, which was subsequently built 1m to the north. Comparison between figs. 3.3 and 3.6 shows that a wall built on the line of the foundation (241C) would have produced a rear range office which was square rather than rectangular. The rear range may have needed to be smaller than originally intended because of the limited space available on the site.

**Cross hall:** Surviving at the western end of the hall was a line of three post holes (285C, 284C and 354C) which were equidistant and parallel with the west wall at a distance of 1.20m. The most northerly (285C) was co-terminal with the opening for the side door into the alley. This suggests the tribunal, situated on the right hand side of the cross hall as viewed from entering, was constructed in timber, as in the Period 5 (Severan) *principia* at South Shields (Bidwell and Speak 1994, 82; figs. 3.27, 3.33).

In a line to the east of the most southerly post hole (354C) were two further post holes (360C and 362C), and a possible third (uncontexted) beyond them, apparently forming a right-angled return of the line of posts supporting the tribunal. There had been robbing of primary floors throughout the *principia*, but comparison of levels taken on surviving flagstones and layers of make up or construction debris indicates that the floor of the rear range room was *c.* 0.20m higher than the floor of the cross hall.

**The rear range:** In the doorway to the western room was a sub-rectangular pit (60C), the east side of which had been also been truncated by the post-medieval drain. This pit was interpreted as Roman or early post-Roman, though whether it pre-dated or post-dated the central wall (54C) is unknown, because all Roman levels in this area had been obliterated and the pit fill, mainly a mortary soil, was sealed by cemetery deposits. A note in the context book says the pit 'contained 4 tiles, 1 sandstone tile, and ash on the bottom and up the sides, fine tile chips next, then mortar and partly burnt lime, and topped with dirty brown clay. Rubbish? No fire in it.' This could have been the robber trench for a threshold stone. Alternatively, in view of its position at the threshold of the rear

range, it is possible that this is the remains of a votive deposit. The sandstone tile probably dates to the third century.

The sunken strong room had been robbed in the post-Roman period, thus removing any trace of the room which would have been above it, but it is possible to suggest the location of the north and west walls of this room. The square north-west corner of the construction pit (212C) for the strong room was at a distance of *c.* 1.10m from the end of the north wall of the rear range office. This allows for a doorway of the same width as that leading out of the cross hall into the alley. The original fill of the construction pit, a mixed yellow and red-brown clay with lenses of mortar and rubble (210C\*), had been cut by a robber trench (193C), which survived as the roughly semi-circular cut seen on plan (figs. 3.3 and 3.6) and in photographs (fig. 3.1). This cut was sufficiently deep to have removed all traces of a north wall (fig. 3.6). The cut for the post-medieval drain (4C) would have removed all traces of wall or wall foundations from the small surviving area of construction pit fill at the north-west corner. The return wall on the west side would also have been removed by a combination of the drain and the robber trench (figs. 3.1 and 3.6). The outer (western) edge of this wall would have been in line with the western edge of the *via praetoria* (see Paper II, fig. 4, and see Paper II, pp. 272–4 for discussion of the fort plan). Presumably the foundations of the rear wall ran over the south-west corner of the strong room construction pit; this would not have been apparent in excavation, as the walls and foundations were left *in situ*. According to the suggested position of these walls (fig. 3.6), the room over the strong room would have been 2.90m deep (measured from north to south). Its width is unknown.

As shown on fig. 3.6, the western room of the rear range would have been *c.* 3.80m wide by 2.90m deep. As mentioned above, if the rear wall had been constructed on the line of abandoned cobble foundations (241C), the room would have been square.

The eastern edge of deposits inside the room had been truncated by the post-medieval drain

(4C) (figs. 3.1 and 3.3). The lowest layers were small patches of sand (89C), sandy clay (90C\*) and a more widespread deposit of yellow sand and mortar (88C), probable construction debris. A post hole (91C) close to the west wall cut the construction debris (88C and 90C\*); it is likely to be related to the construction process and originally overlain by the robbed-out floor. In the eastern half of the room the construction debris was covered by a layer of brown silty clay (93C), presumably the remains of robbed-out clay floor or floor make up. At the south-west corner a very small strip of clay (96C\*) may be another possible trace of the same material.

Evidence that the room had once been equipped with a channel hypocaust comes mainly from robber trenches. A robber trench (cut not contexted), ran north/south roughly down the centre of the room. The fill (92C), is classed as belonging to the third or early fourth century and described below, but it is useful to mention here that it contained flat stones, which could have been derived from a stone lining or capping. The northern end was truncated by one of F. G. Simpson's excavation trenches, which ran along the southern face of the north wall, widening at the junction with the north/south robber trench. The wall is annotated on a field plan (not reproduced here) 'burning on the south faces of these stones', so it is likely that the Simpson excavation had been following another robbed-out hypocaust channel along this face of the north wall. The southern end of the robber trench was cut by another intrusion (94C), probably another robber trench, running east/west, also of the third or early fourth century and discussed below. This area was complicated by the cut of an Anglo-Saxon grave, and deposits were contaminated by seepage from the post-medieval drain (4C). However a sketch in the context book (not reproduced here) shows that this robber trench ran along the inner edge of the rear wall until it was truncated at the east by the drain.

A sketch section in the context book provides evidence of robbing and a rebuild of the wall

(see below, p. 34) at the point where the hypocaust stoke hole would have been. It shows the lowest of the robber trench fills (100C\*; see p. 34), which consisted of black clay and cobbles, with inclusions of mortar close to the wall. The clay extended into the wall core and behind one of the facing stones of the second course. A stone from the bottom course was missing. This can be interpreted as the rebuilding of the wall to block up the gap between the external stoke pit and the hypocaust channels. No surviving remains of an external stoke pit were found but there were many patches of burnt material, some of them overlying the surviving foundations (241C) of the demolished earlier east/west wall, and also deposits containing probable demolition material. These are described below, together with the other contexts to the south of the *principia*.

### Strong room construction

As mentioned above the construction trench for the sunken strong room was a large sub-rectangular pit (212C), but excavation also revealed two smaller projections (fig. 3.3). One extended south of the line of the rear wall for 0.80m, with an additional slot projecting from its south-western corner. This southern extension (417C) was excavated to a depth of 0.80m, but the full depth was not reached. It had a fill of red and yellow clay with stones (240C\*) similar to the fill (210C\*) of the main construction pit. There is no evidence of a rearward projecting *aedes*, so this extension of the construction trench should probably be seen as merely a feature of the construction process, to allow space for the masons to work.

At the north-west corner was an L-shaped slot (351C, fill 352C\*). This may also be a feature of the construction process, or might possibly relate to a staircase into the strong room.

Although primary floors in the *principia* had been almost completely robbed, it is possible to estimate their original levels from surviving flagstones and make up layers. On this basis the cross hall floor would have been at a level of 26.84m OD, and that of the western room of



*Fig. 3.4A* Stone lining of the strong room, viewed from the south-east.



*Fig. 3.4B* Detail of stone lining at the southern end of the strong room.

the rear range at 27.04m OD. On a section drawing in the archive (not reproduced here) the level on the floor of the strong room was 24.40m OD. Therefore it was 2.64m below the level of the rear range floors and 2.44m below the cross hall. The walls of the strong room were formed by a single face of large ashlar blocks (figs. 3.4A and B). The west wall (209C) (fig. 3.5B), survived to two courses at the southern end, but only one at the north. Most blocks had an average length of 0.60m and the height varied from 0.31 to 0.38m; two blocks had diamond broaching and five had diagonal tooling. The blocks were mortared, apart from the space between the two southern blocks on the lowest course, where there was clay packing. The south wall (208C) survived to three courses (fig. 3.5A); the blocks were of similar size to those in the west wall, but the tooling was said to be rougher. The lowest course was clay bonded and set on a concrete foundation, 50mm deep; the upper two courses were bonded with white mortar. In the northern part of the construction pit the clay subsoil had slumped forward into the cut. The space behind the walls was filled with clay containing mortar and rubble (210C\*).

The only surviving stone at the northern end of the strong room was a block (225C), which was only c. 0.20m high (figs 3.3 and 3.5B). This may have been the survivor of a floor of heavy slabs, possibly disturbed from its position during robbing. Abutting it and extending across the base of the strong room was a layer of pale yellow mortar (224C\*) with small stones, clay and (the context book also notes) 'wood'. Overlying the mortar and large slab was robbing debris, described in Part 12

### Area to the rear of the *principia*

There was a series of deposits probably associated with the construction of the strong room. The lowest was a clay layer (435C\*), almost identical to the clay (240C\*) within the strong room construction trench, which may have been spread out or redeposited from it. Above it was a thin layer of sand and iron pan (413C\*). A thin clay layer (414C\*) was said to

overlie the iron pan (413C\*); it consisted of several discontinuous patches of redeposited material, presumably indicating trample while the construction work was going on. Overlying it was a more substantial layer of mixed clay, mortar and tile (243C\*), possible construction debris. A layer of gravel (450C\*) overlaid the debris and was itself overlain by cobbles (397C), possibly representing metalling of an alley or street, which subsided over the fill of the strong room construction trench. To the west the remains of the postulated hypocaust furnace may be represented by an ashy clay layer (97C) (fig. 3.3) containing a lens of mortar soil, pebbles and densely packed cobbles (119C\*). To the west of that was more street or alley metalling, consisting of patches of 'densely rammed cobbles' (121C). A layer of dark soil, mortar, small stones and cobbles, with small pockets of burning (244C\*), indicates contamination by layers above which contained debris from the furnace.

These deposits (121C, 244C\* and 119C\*) were overlain by a layer of ash and coal (114C\*), presumably debris from the furnace. The cobbles (397C) to the rear of the strong room were also covered with a thick, black layer of burnt material (204C\*).

### Finds

#### Dating evidence – pottery

There was a group of pottery from the fill of the strong room construction trench (417C (79LQ), 210C\* (79LK) and 240C\* (79MH)). Most of this group (60%) is made up of BB2 (see fig. 15.5, no. 22). There are a few sherds of a poppyhead beaker and a sherd of Hadrianic samian.

#### New building to the south of the *principia*

The rebuilding to the south of the *principia* recorded by F. G. Simpson is likely to have been constructed in the third century. At least some of the primary north/south walls were demolished and replaced by a new building, identified as a *schola* (see Paper II, pp. 268–9). A short length of wall survived at the east end; also surviving were the remains of a hypocaust

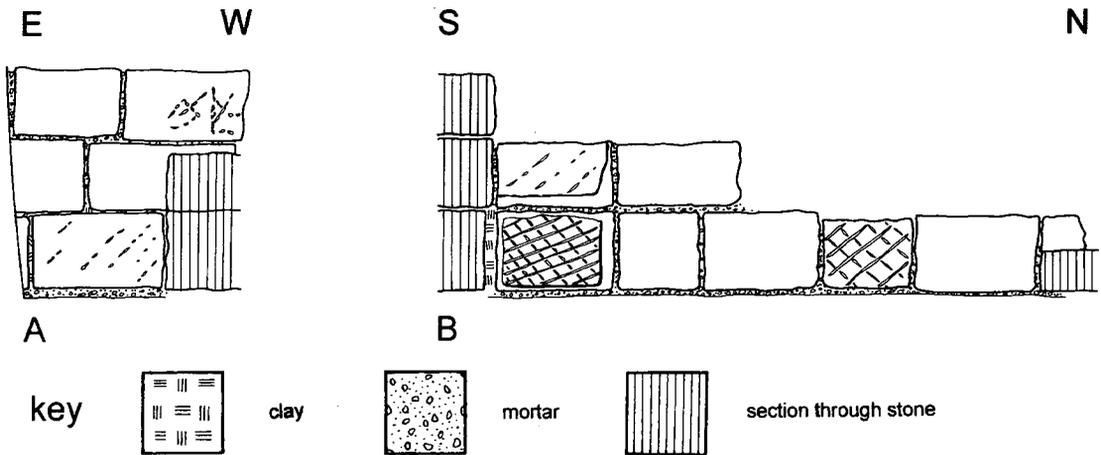


Fig. 3.5 Elevations of the surviving walls of the *principia* strong room. A: the south wall. B: the west wall. Scale 1:40.

with *pilae* consisting of stone columns 2ft (0.61m high), which carried a raised floor of flag stones covered by three layers of *opus signinum* (Spain and Simpson 1930, 504; and see Paper II, pp. 265–9, figs. 4 and 5)

### MODIFICATIONS IN THE THIRD OR EARLY FOURTH CENTURY

#### Disuse of the hypocaust in the rear range office (figs. 3.2, 3.7 and 3.8)

In the rear range room the linings of the hypocaust channels were robbed, the channels filled in and a new flagged floor laid over them. There is no dating evidence for the disuse of the hypocaust, but there is surely some significance in the careful way the gap in the rear wall for the external furnace was filled so neatly that the rebuild was not apparent. A small group of pottery from the new floor included calcite gritted ware, but although this ware becomes more widespread in the fourth century, small quantities of this ware reached the north during the third century.

The fill of the robber trench for the north/south hypocaust channel (92C) (fig. 3.2) consisted of a brown silty clay containing flat stones and tile. The east/west robber trench running beside the rear wall (94C) was filled

with dark clay containing cobbles and inclusions of mortar and yellow clay (100C\*), overlain and filled by brown clay (99C\*). The uppermost fill was a patch of dark soil and white mortar (87C\*). A field plan (not reproduced here) shows pieces of tile in the fill of this intrusion; the sketch in the context book shows the location of three iron objects and an iron nail.

The primary floor had also been robbed during this phase, as all that remained were patches of clay (93C, 96C\*), and a widespread layer of probable construction debris (88C) was exposed. Resting on this was a scatter of iron nails, presumably derived from the demolition of timber features, and more nails were incorporated into the new floor surface (81C). This comprised small irregularly-shaped flagstones (81C) (fig. 3.7), in places two or three deep, and also included some tile.

The demolition of an external furnace would have allowed for the remodelling of the area to the south of the *principia*. An east/west wall was constructed 1m to the south of the rear range. The surviving traces of it consisted of one or two courses of a roughly-built foundation (154C) (figs. 3.7 and 3.8), made up of large, irregularly-shaped stone slabs and yellow mortar. No dressed facing stones were used in

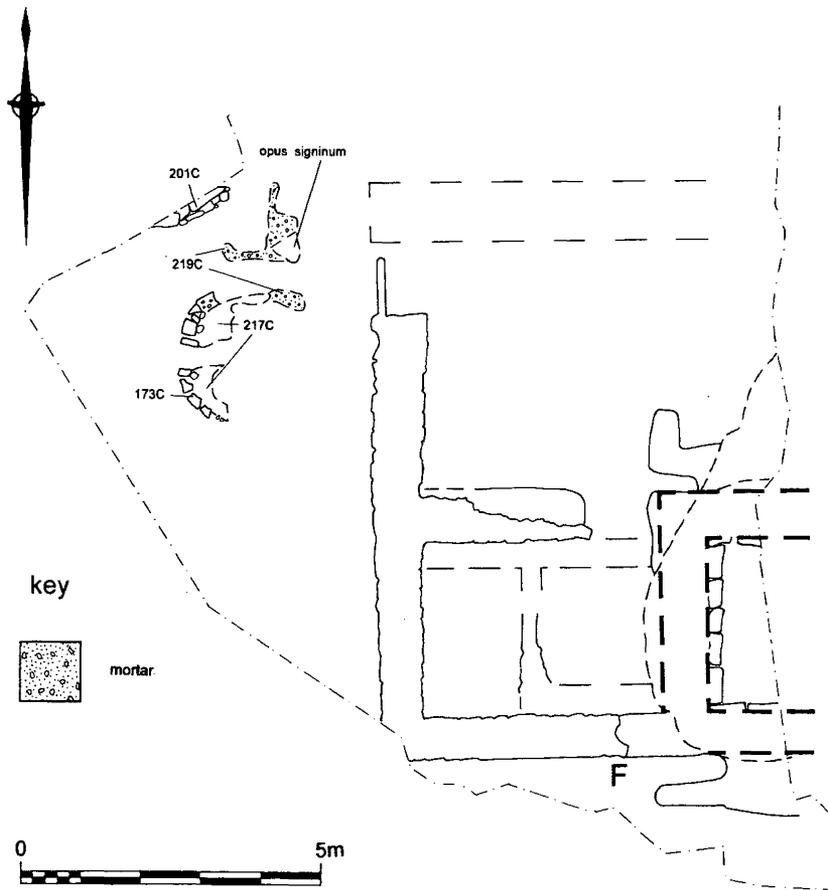


Fig. 3.6 Simplified plan of the primary principia showing the probable positions of walls over the sunken strong room and the channel hypocaust in the room at the south-west corner. The probable position of the hypocaust furnace is marked F. Also shown are the remains of the probable hearth dating to the second quarter of the fourth century and spreads of material associated with the demolition of the east wall of the primary praetorium. Scale 1:125.

it. A trace of this wall survived to the west of the post-medieval drain, giving a total surviving length of c. 3.50m. For part of its distance the new wall re-used the abandoned early cobble foundation (241C). However, there was clear evidence that these two sets of foundations were of two different phases. While the east end of the earlier foundation (241C) was cut by the construction trench for the *principia* strong room, the later (154C) continued further east, where it clearly post-dated the construction of the strong room. In that area it overlay not

only the cobbled surface (397C) above the strong room construction trench fill, but also the thick layer of burnt material (204C\*), presumably derived from the hypocaust stoke pit.

### Finds

#### Dating evidence – pottery

The pottery from the secondary floor (81C (79DK)) included a highly burnt and distorted sherd of unidentified fabric, a sherd of Central Gaulish black slipped ware, scraps of an oxidised fabric and a sherd



of calcite gritted ware. In the north calcite gritted ware becomes most common during the fourth century, but it was made throughout the Roman period in Yorkshire, and small quantities of it will have reached Newcastle during the third century.

The wall foundation (154C (79KY)) south of the *principia* contained a single sherd of Antonine samian and a cooking pot body sherd in an unidentified grey fabric.

### MODIFICATIONS IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF THE FOURTH CENTURY (FIGS. 3.3 AND 3.7)

#### Rebuilt north wall

The north wall may have suffered from subsidence into the fill of the underlying pre-fort ditch (447C). It was rebuilt with foundations (279C\*, 295C\*, 327C\*, 333C\* and 385C\*), which were c. 1.70m wide, lapping over the earliest line of abandoned foundations (444C), to extend into the edge of the 'via principalis'. A coin of the 330s and an illegible third- or fourth-century coin from these foundations provide the dating evidence for the rebuild (see below). The rebuilt wall itself (248C) (fig. 3.7) lay 0.40–0.45m further south of the earliest foundations (444C) and also fell short of their western end by 0.40m (compare figs. 3.3 and 3.7).

The north wall (248C) had an offset lower course, possibly to strengthen it because of its position over the ditch. Less of this wall survived than the other walls, because it had been more heavily robbed. Two small post holes (324C and 325C) cut the southern edge of its construction trench.

#### Finds

##### Dating evidence – pottery

The foundations of the north wall (333C\* (79JJ); 385C\* (79KO)) produced a sherd of a Nene Valley flagon and residual mortarium and samian sherds.

#### Coins

Foundations of north wall:  
333C\* (79JJ) No.291, Hse of Constantine,  
330–35?, C/C

385C\* (79KO) No.373, illegible third or fourth-century coin, C/C

### MODIFICATIONS OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE FOURTH CENTURY

#### *Principia* cross hall (fig. 3.7)

Pottery and coins from probable make up layers indicate a reflooring of the cross hall in the second half of the fourth century. The deposits in question survived between the rear of the north wall and the front of the strong room. Overlying patches of cobbles (321C, 322C and 326C\*) were layers of mortar (299C, 311C), which could represent floor make up. A few flag stones (not separately contexted) overlying the mortar (299C) may be remnants of a flagged floor.

#### Finds

##### Dating evidence – pottery

The floor make up (299C (79JL)) in the cross hall contained a single sherd of calcite gritted ware with groove decoration, which seems to be a feature of Huntcliff type vessels of the late fourth century.

#### Coins

Cobble make up of cross hall:  
326C\* (79JT) No.315, 'House of Constantine',  
341–46, C/SW  
No.275, Constantine II/Constans,  
346–48, C/SW

#### Other finds

The floor make up (321C) contained a fragment of lead waste

### ROBBING AND ABANDONMENT

#### Robbing

**Cross hall:** At some time in the second half of the fourth century the floor was robbed, leaving only the few flag stones mentioned above. A pit (291C\*) was cut down into earlier layers. The lower fill of the pit was of yellow clay (297C\*);

the upper fill (292C\*) of stony soil containing facing stones and inclusions of clay and mortar was thought to be part of the overlying accumulation of loam described below.

Evidence of other robbing in the *principia* at this time is provided by the large re-used stones used to resurface the '*via principalis*' in the second half of the fourth century (see Part 5, pp. 52–3). These included blocks of the type used to hold the screen in front of the *aedes*.

### Finds

#### Coin

291C\* (79JY) No.160, Constantine I/II, 330–35, C/C

### Abandonment

Over the probable floor make up (299C) was a layer which is described in archive notes as an accumulation of loam (270C\*). It contained mortar, carbon flecks and small stones and a further small lens of stony soil with mortar (283C\*), which seems to indicate a period of abandonment. Since it only contained small stones, with no record of fallen facing stones or other building materials, there is no indication of serious collapse of the building. Although neglected, it does not appear that it would have been uninhabitable. In fact the accumulation of earth was only recorded in the eastern half of the surviving part of the cross hall, *i.e.* the central part of the room, opposite the entrance. This could imply that only part of the roof was missing, or even that the roof was intact but soil was blown in because the door was missing.

A group of coins, ending with one of the only four Theodosian issues found on the site, provides useful dating evidence for this period of abandonment.

### Finds

#### Dating evidence – pottery

The accumulation of loam (270C\* (79JD)) contained a fourth-century beaded rim Nene Valley ware beaker, and a Huntcliff type rim of the late fourth century.

### Coins

270C\* (79JD) No.40, Gallienus, 260–68, ?W/C  
 No.296, Hse of Constantine, 335–41, C/SW  
 No.189, Theodora, 337–40, C/SW  
 No.274, Constantius II, Constans, 346–48, UW/UW  
 No.282, Constantius II, Constans, 348–50, C/C  
 No.357, Theodosius I, 388–95, C/SW

### Other finds

Fragments of lead waste were found in contexts 292C\* and 270C\*.

## LATE ROMAN RE-OCCUPATION

(FIGS. 3.8 AND 14.3)

A significant event was the re-occupation of the *principia* after the period of abandonment described above. A *terminus post quem* of 388–95 is provided by the Theodosian coin, slightly worn.

The nature of this re-occupation deserves comment. It is likely that the *aedes* screen had already been removed in a previous episode of robbing. As described below, it is possible that this is the time when the inscribed base of a statue to the Dowager Empress Julia Domna was broken up and part of it used as a threshold stone. Two of the layers described below contained pieces of red deer antler, more common in post-Roman layers (see Part 12, p. 115). The floor of the rear range office seems of fairly crude construction. Although the spreads of ash and charcoal on it and the floor of the cross hall could belong to the final demolition of the building, they could equally well represent occupation material. Altogether this does not paint a picture of normal military life in the headquarters building.

**Cross hall:** A clay levelling layer (266C\*), containing red deer antler, was deposited over the loam (270C\*) which had accumulated in the cross hall during the period of abandonment. This clay raised the level of the cross hall floor

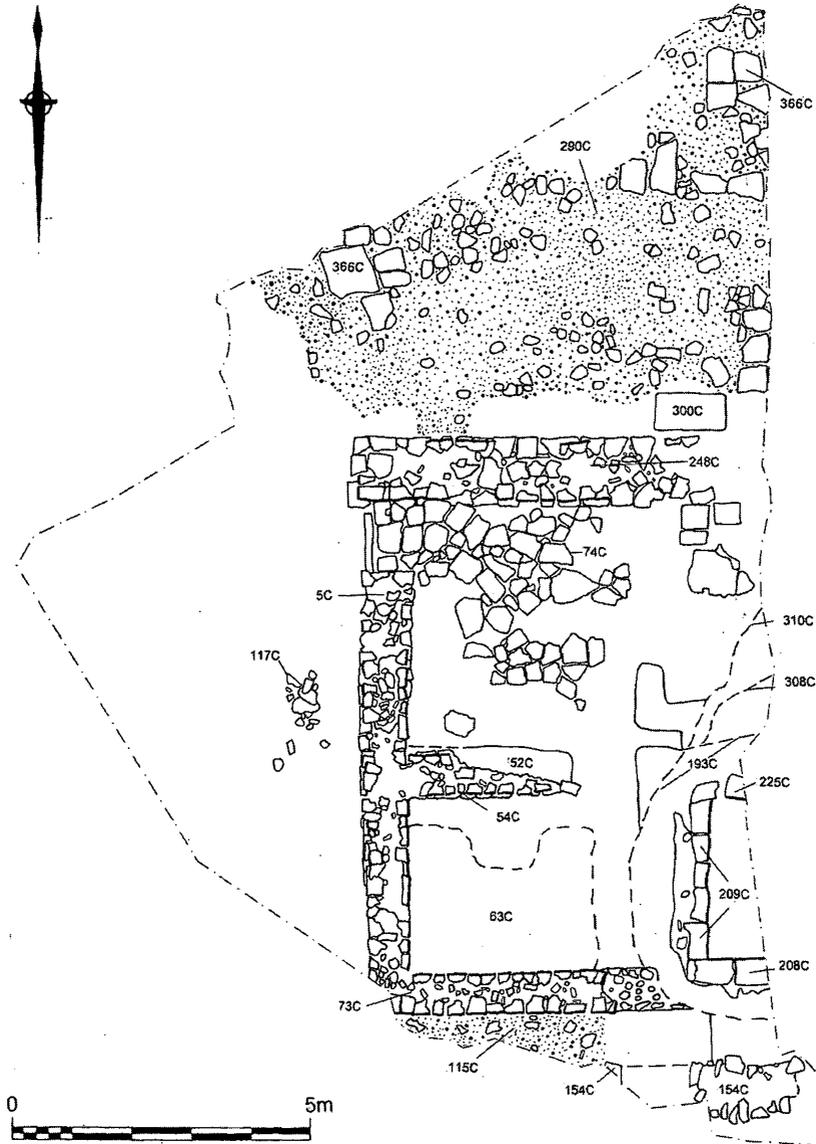


Fig. 3.8. The central range in the second half of the fourth century. The fourth metalling of the 'via principalis' included large flag stones. In the principia cross hall a period of abandonment was followed by the laying of a new flagged floor at some after 388–95. The Julia Domna stone may have been laid at the entrance at this time. Fallen sandstone roofing slates were found in the alley. The state of the praetorium in the late fourth century is unknown. Scale 1:125.

to that in the rear range office. A small patch of clay (278C\*) under the levelling overlay the footings of the north wall (248C). These deposits had obviously been derived from earlier material from elsewhere on the site and included residual finds. The top of the clay levelling was cut by a small gully (280C\*) and a post hole (58C\*); there were also various patches of burnt material (55C\*, 56C\*, 57C\*, 59C\*).

A flagged floor (74C) was laid above the levelling layer (fig. 3.8). The stones were much larger and heavier than those which had been used in the rear range room in the third or early fourth century, and clearly consisted of re-used Roman stones including a pivot stone near the doorway (fig. 3.8) and architectural fragments (278C\*, 288C\*) (fig. 14.3, no. 1). Spreads of ashy soil (252C\*) lay over the flagged floor (74C).

The block (300C) bearing the inscription to Julia Domna was found lying parallel with and abutting the north wall of the *principia*, a little to the west of the presumed position of a central entrance. It lay on a patch of silt (286C\*) over the latest metalling (302C\*). *A terminus post quem* for its use is given by coins of the 340s and Huntcliff type calcite gritted ware of the 360s from the silt. As it was overlain by modern layers, it is not possible to be more precise about the date of its deposition or its function. The published account of the inscription raised the questions of whether the stone could have been placed there deliberately, perhaps as a threshold, and whether its deposition could have occurred in a late Roman or post-Roman context (Daniels and Harbottle 1980, 65).

From the point of view of levels, it is feasible that the stone was used as a threshold during this very late Roman re-occupation of the *principia*. The flagged floor (74C) in the cross hall was at the same level as the top surface of the Julia Domna stone. The level on the top of the stone was 27.15mOD; the maximum surviving height of the flagged floor was at 27.17mOD.

The average of all the levels on the flagging was 27.05mOD, but the floor was incomplete and many stones were missing. On the latest surface of the '*via principalis*' (see Part 5, p. 52), the level on a patch of flag stones (366C) closest to the Julia Domna stone was 26.74mOD, the difference in height between the two being 0.41m, not unreasonably high for a step

**Rear range:** There was evidence of a surface rather than patching in the rear range. This comprised a layer of brown soil, ash, mortar and flat sandstone fragments (63C), forming a fairly level surface over the late Roman flagged floor (81C). The surface was cut by a stake hole (78C\*), the fill of which was loose black soil containing charcoal fragments. An annotation on a field plan (not reproduced here) also indicates that the surface (63C) included areas of carbonised wood.

**Area to the south of the rear range offices:** Above the ash and coal layer (114C\*) (see above), was a surface of small flagstones (115C), containing red deer antler.

The final collapse of the *principia* in the post-Roman period is described in Part 12.

## *Finds*

### *Dating evidence – pottery*

The levelling layer in the cross hall (266C\* (79IT)) contained a single sherd of calcite gritted ware with groove decoration, which seems to be a feature of the Huntcliff type vessels of the late fourth century.

### *Coins*

Levelling layer in cross hall

266C\* (79IT) No.6, Hadrian, 134–38, W/W  
No. 61, Victorinus/Tetricus I,  
268–73, C/C

### *Other finds*

Patching or flooring in rear range  
Copper alloy: fig. 18.3, no. 21, buckle, 266C\*  
There was also a fragment of lead waste.