

IV.

INTERIM REPORT ON THE EXCAVATIONS OF THE ROMAN FORT
AT MUMRILLS, NEAR FALKIRK. BY GEORGE MACDONALD,
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The site of the Fort of Mumrills has for some years been known to occupy portions of two fields on the ridge extending eastward from the village of Laurieston, near Falkirk. The ground is valuable agricultural land, and, consequently, such an extensive continuous excavation as is desirable cannot be undertaken. By the kindness of the farmer, however, the Society has now been able on two occasions to conduct exploration.

Work was commenced on the westmost of the two fields in the winter of 1923, and continued on a limited area until the commencement of August 1924. With the removal of the crop in late November of last year, further excavation was made possible in the eastmost of the two fields, and this proceeded without interruption until the ground was required for agricultural purposes in the end of February.

The result of the excavations has been to reveal three, if not four, systems of ditches, which so far have only been explored in the western or Castletowrie field. The limited area of ground on which we were able to work during the summer of 1924 did not enable us to examine, with any degree of thoroughness, more than the defences of the Antonine Fort. These were found to have consisted of a rampart, probably made of clay, and raised on a cradling of quarried stone, with two ditches in front of it on the south side and, seemingly, three on the west. Where the rampart forms a junction with that of the Antonine vallum, the remains of a small circular turret were discovered. The western gateway was located, and presented certain features of interest. Between the ends of the rampart on each side of the road was a deep pit, some 11 feet in length, 3 feet 6 inches in depth from the surface-level of Roman times, and the same in breadth, filled with boulders embedded in clay, possibly the foundation of some stone structure which had formed part of the gateway.

The work which was carried on during the winter months of 1924-5 in the eastmost of the two fields was productive of valuable results; the foundations of the Principia were laid bare, and gave conclusive evidence of, at least, two periods of reconstruction, the

dimensions of the earliest of the structures showing a headquarters building, probably as large as, if not larger, than any other found in Britain. Flanking this foundation on either side were the sites of two long buttressed buildings. That on the west was reduced to the absolute foundations; that on the east, however, in portions, showed the wall still standing to a height of 3 feet.

In the excavation of 1924 a considerable amount of pottery was recovered, the bulk of it of the Antonine period, but a few pieces, probably, referable to the earlier or Agricolan period. Other relics comprise a bow fibula of unusual type, a knee fibula, a small penannular brooch in fragments, two small rings, and an enamelled stud, all of bronze. Objects of iron were more numerous, and include two keys, a socketed spear-head, a knife with a heavy triangular blade, a pointed socket, possibly the butt end of a spear-shaft, an ox-goad, numerous nails, and several clamps or cleats.

Relics were remarkably scarce in the excavation of the Principia and the buttressed buildings. Very little pottery came to light, but there were found a number of pieces of burnt daub showing the impression of wattles, indicating that on the site, in some period of occupation, wattle and daub construction had been employed. A small dress-fastener, beautifully enamelled, was almost the only object of importance recovered. The coins found during the two seasons number eight in all, and belong chiefly to the second century, the latest being a "second brass" of Pius of A.D. 151.