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THE ROMAN FORTS AT CARRIDEN AND BROWNHART LAW.

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CARRIDEN.

The easternmost Roman fort associated with the Antonine Wall is usually placed at Carriden, eleven miles west of Cramond, on the evidence of Roman inscriptions, coins and pottery, noted by Sibbald and Gordon. Sibbald localises the discoveries at Carriden House,¹ and Sir George Macdonald, reviewing this evidence in the second edition of his *Roman Wall in Scotland*, considered that "vague as they are these considerations are not to be lightly set aside," and was inclined to accept them as "presumptive proof that there was once a Roman fort at Carriden."²

Confirmation of this view was obtained in 1945, when observation from the air disclosed the defences of a Roman fort, revealed by differences in the growth of crop over them. Photographs then taken show the dark lines, so clearly visible from the air, which mark the ditches. In an arable field three parallel ditches, on a north and south alinement, mark the east side of the fort. They bend round to the west at their south end, and, rather less than half-way along their line from the south, there is an interruption as if for a gate. A visit to the site in September 1945 showed that no remains were to be seen on the surface, the fields and garden which cover the site having removed all traces. But trial trenches dug a year later disclosed the buried ditches and yielded Roman pottery of Antonine date.

The site occupies a level shelf, close to the sea, but 100 feet above the shore (fig. 1), with wide views across the Forth. The eastern terminus of

¹ Ordnance Survey maps, 25-inch scale, Linlithgowshire, N. III, 4.

² Macdonald, *Roman Wall in Scotland* (1934), pp. 190-1.

the Antonine Wall at Bridgeness is in full view, three-quarters of a mile to the north-west.

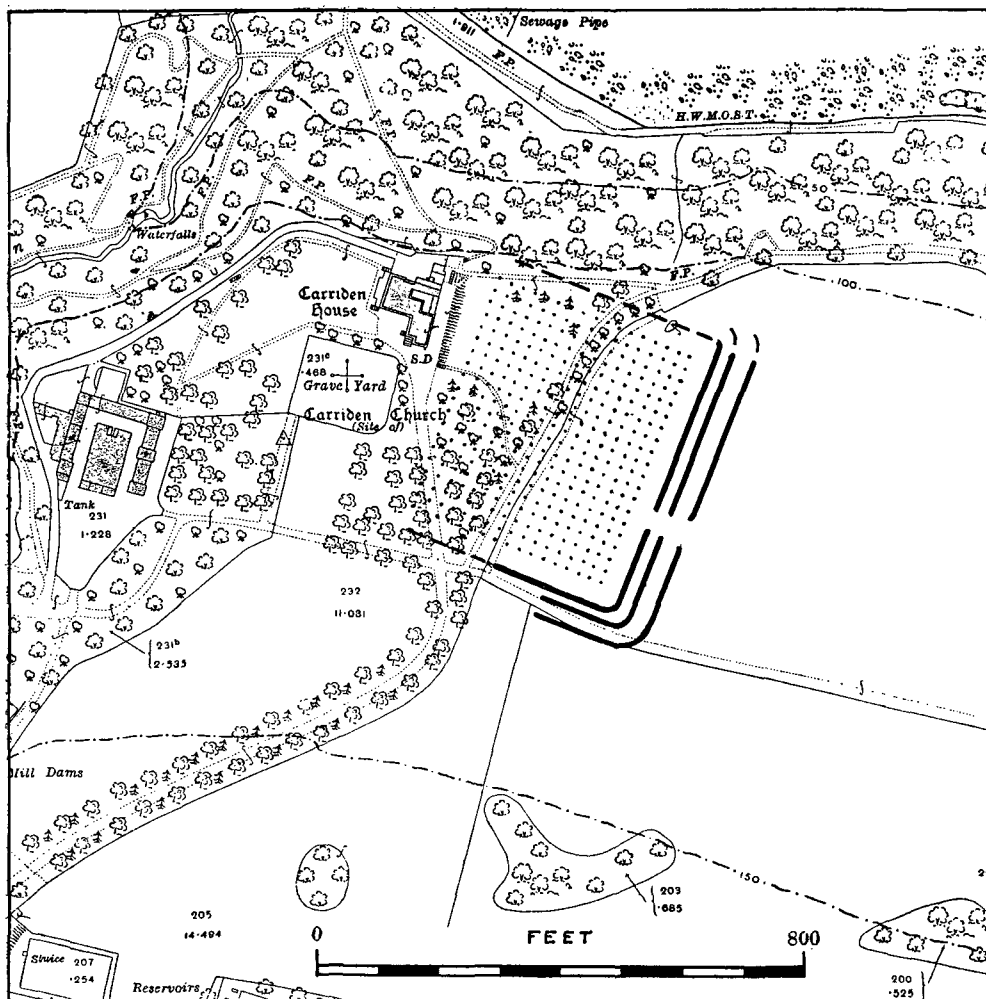


Fig. 1. Plan of the Roman Fort at Carriden.

(Based on the 1/2500 Ordnance map by permission of the Director-General, Ordnance Survey.)

The air photograph shows as much of the fort as is contained in the long field (No. 233) east of Carriden House (Pl. XXXIII). There are plain traces of the rounded south-east angle, where the ditches turn through a right angle to the west. The approximate position of the north-east angle may also be determined from the photograph, showing that the east side was some 440 feet long, with a gateway at about 150 feet from the south-east angle.

The south defences are partly concealed by the lane to Stacks Farm, but a length of about 200 feet lies to the east of the sunk garden-fence of Carriden House. It may thus be presumed that the fort extended well westwards into the garden. Since, however, no interruption for a gate appears in the visible portion of the south side, where the gate may be supposed to have occupied the middle position, the south rampart was apparently at least 400 feet long (fig. 1). The position of the north rampart is determined by the north-east angle, already noted.

A trial trench across the eastern defences, at 100 feet north of the south-east angle, showed the middle ditch to be $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide and $4\frac{1}{4}$ feet deep. The inner ditch, at an interval of 30 feet, was found to be $12\frac{1}{4}$ feet wide, but water prevented its depth from being determined. No remains of a rampart were found in this section. Two trenches dug within the area of the fort showed 18 inches of topsoil, covering natural clay and marl. Some rough scattered stones were also encountered, and a shallow pit, cut to a depth of 10 inches in the subsoil. Coarse ware and Samian ware occurred, if sparsely, and the Samian ware included a stamped fragment of shape 37 by the Antonine potter CINNAMUS, with his typical vine-scroll decoration.¹ This very limited exploration of the fort yielded no remains of buildings. An impression that the site had been heavily denuded was conveyed both by the removal of the rampart and the shallowness of the ditches as now existing. Only further digging would show whether Roman levels remain undisturbed in other parts of the area.

More digging than was possible on the occasion here described will be needed to recover the line of the west defences. The terrain is not inviting. To west of the sunk fence already mentioned, part of the ground has been terraced to form a lawn, and the rest is covered by trees and shrubbery on either side of a drive. It may even be that Carriden House itself lies astride the ditch system. But there was originally ample room. Beyond the house the ground is level for some 400 feet, and only then falls away steeply to a small stream. There is thus space available not only for the fort but for an annexe, and it should be noted that no signs of an annexe appear on the air photograph either to east or south-east.²

Finally, a technical point in connection with observation from the air should be recorded. Field 233 was under wheat in 1945, when the fort was first seen, and, although the site has since been carefully watched from the air each summer, the crop markings have not reappeared. In 1946 the crop was again a cereal, undersown with clover, while in 1947 the field was in ley and in 1948 under roots; yet in each year the growth has been quite

¹ Cf. Oswald and Pryce, *An introduction to the study of Terra Sigillata* (1920), pl. xii, No. 3.

² The cost of the excavations mentioned in this paper was borne by the Christianbury Trust. For permission to excavate at Carriden the writer is indebted to Mr Paul of Stacks Farm and to Mr W. H. Thomson of Carriden House. The digging took place on 24th-25th September 1946.

insensitive to the buried ditches. Thus, with a normal agricultural rotation, involving often a two-year ley, it can happen that only in one summer out of every five or six are the buried features revealed by crop markings. This clearly emphasises the need for observations extending over the whole cycle of rotation.

BROWNHART LAW.

In July 1945, a rectangular enclosure close beside Dere Street on Brownhart Law¹ was seen and photographed from the air by the writer, and with the photographs (Pl. XXXIV) as a guide Sir Walter Aitchison and Dr Richmond had no difficulty in identifying the site on the ground in the same autumn. Dr Richmond's plan, based on measurements then taken, is reproduced here (fig. 2). A trial trench was dug across the site by the writer in July 1946.²

The enclosure lies on the north-east end of Brownhart Law, at an altitude of 1550 feet, occupying level ground high above the head of the deep valley of the Hindhope Burn. It is 1250 yards north of the Roman site at Chew Green, and on the west (Scottish) side of the Border fence and of the Roman road, 45 feet away. Concealment by heather and bracken which normally cover the site is probably the reason why it had not been observed before either by the tenant of Hindhope or by anyone examining the line of Dere Street. The work is enclosed by a turf rampart about 15 feet wide, which now stands to a height of 18 inches. The angles are well rounded, and there is a 10-foot gap for a gate in the centre of the east side facing the Roman road. A single ditch runs from this gate round the south-east angle and along the south side to the south-west angle, where it becomes double. The two ditches then continue round the rest of the work till the gate is again reached. On the north side the inner ditch is 6 feet wide, the outer ditch 9 feet; each was originally about 3 feet deep. The absence of the outer ditch on the south seems due to the presence of rock immediately below the top-soil, which would greatly have increased the labour of ditch digging on this part of the site. The work measures 70 by 85 feet over the ramparts, and encloses an area of one-tenth of an acre. Size and plan place it within a well-known category of Roman military signal stations.

Northwards from the site, however, Dere Street is hidden after a distance of one and a half miles by Blackhall Hill, where another signal station would be needed if the line of stations bordered the Roman road. Search has failed to find any such post. Southwards even the fort at Chew Green, only three-quarters of a mile away, is not in sight. It thus seems evident that Brownhart Law was not part of any signalling system organised along the

¹ Ordnance Survey maps, 6-inch scale, Northumberland, N. XXXI, S.W.

² Mr Aikman, factor of the Monteviot estate, kindly gave permission for the excavations on Brownhart Law, which were undertaken on 9th-10th July 1946.

BROWNHART LAW

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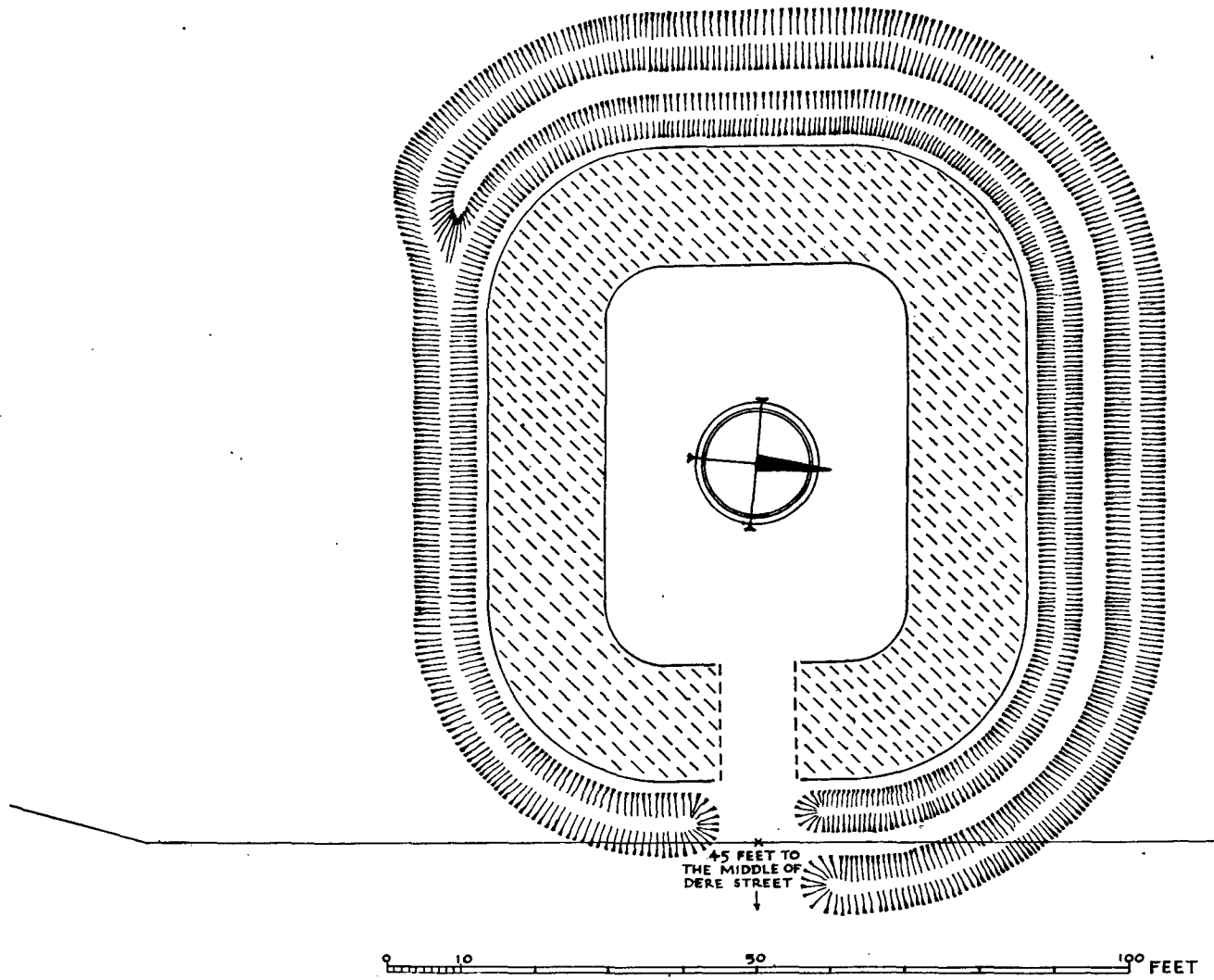


Fig. 2. Plan of Roman Fort, Brownhart Law, Roxburghshire.

road. Nor can it have been the permanent quarters for signallers. The post on Brownhart Law is as exposed a site as can be found anywhere beside Dere Street, and it may be presumed that men on duty came from the fort at Chew Green, situated in a much more sheltered position just to the south. But in one direction the view, restricted in others, is notable.

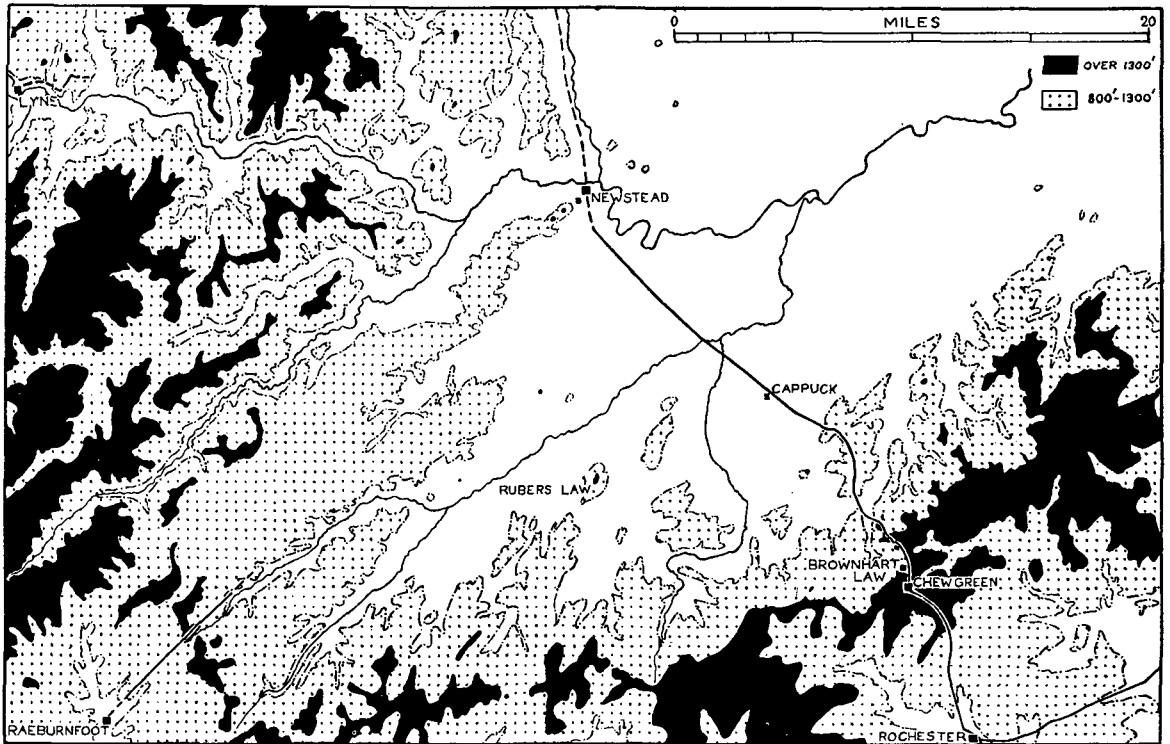


Fig. 3. Map of Teviotdale.

To west and north-west it extends as far as the mountains of Ettrick Forest, and in this quarter signals could be seen over long distances. Right in the centre of this vast panorama the eye lights at once upon the bleak, isolated summit of Rubers Law, which is itself set in the middle of an amphitheatre of hills, and is unquestionably the best position from which to watch Teviotdale and adjacent valleys (fig. 3). If the purpose of the station at Brownhart Law was to receive messages from an advanced signal station watching over the Teviot basin, no better position for such an eyrie could be found than Rubers Law, which dominates the entire scene in incomparable fashion.

The summit of Rubers Law (1392 feet) is crowned by a ruined native fort, while the still more ruined defences of an older and much larger native hill-fort encircle its lower slope. But there is evidence for the presence on



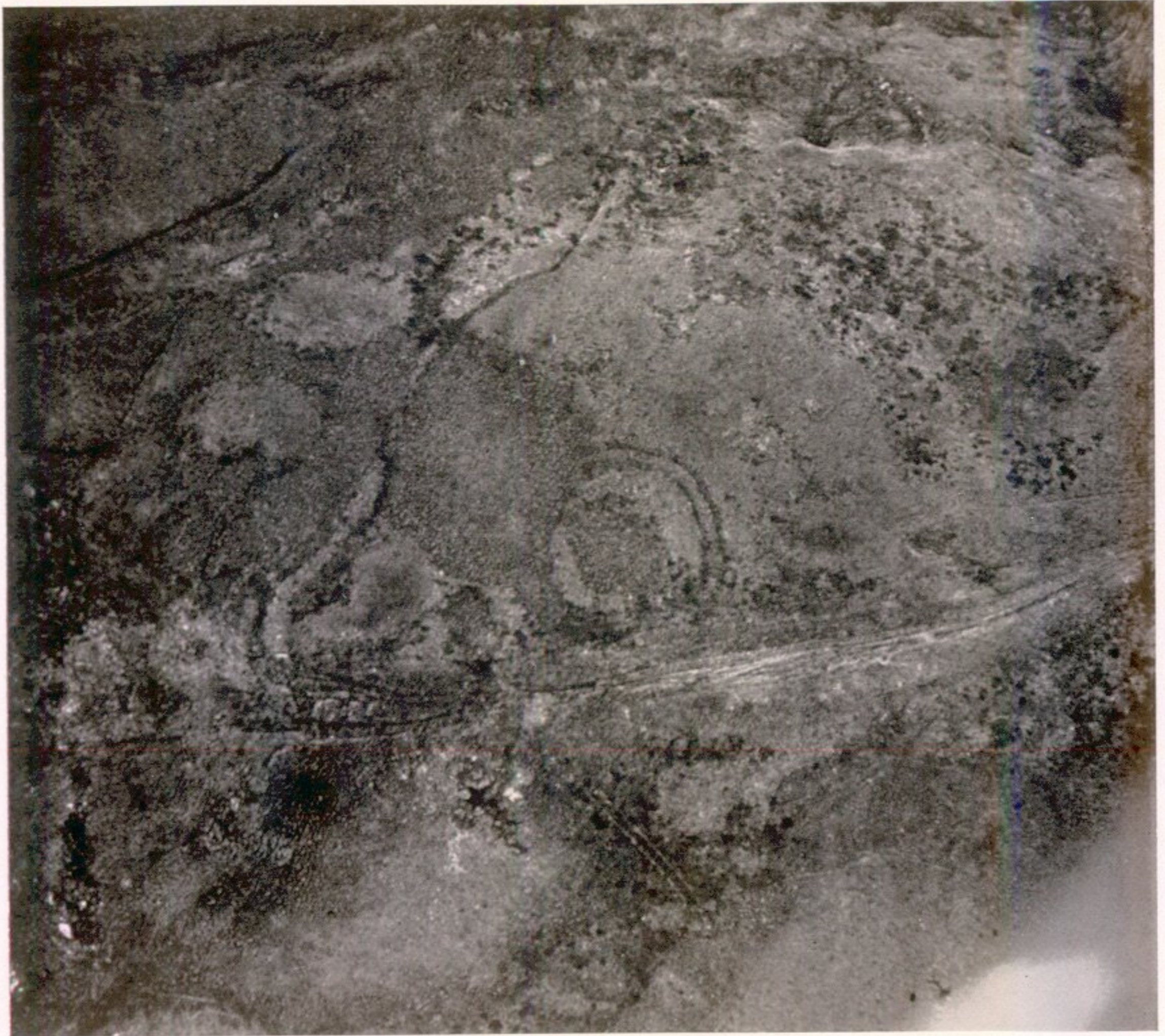
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[*Photo: J. K. St Joseph.*

The Roman Fort at Carriden.

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[*To face p. 172.*



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Roman Fort on Brownhart Law, Roxburghshire.

J. K. ST JOSEPH.

the hilltop of Romans as well as natives. The well-known hoard of bronze *patellæ*, found on the south side of the hill in 1863, may indeed only be looted material; but among the ruins of the native walling on the summit are squared blocks of dressed sandstone from a building of Roman fashion. These stones were first described by Dr A. O. Curle,¹ who noted that some were dressed with typically Roman diamond or feather broaching, and that they measured on the dressed face 11 to 15 inches in length and 8 inches in height. A few stones, from 2 to 3 feet long, he described as having the appearance of lintels or sills of windows. Dr Curle considered that there was little doubt that the stones represented remains of a Roman building, which had been incorporated in the ramparts of a native hill fort. These observations were confirmed during a visit to the site in 1945 with Mr Angus Graham and Dr I. A. Richmond, and again by Dr Richmond and Professor Piggott in 1947.

The dressed blocks are of pale red sandstone, foreign to the hill; for the hill is itself of the trap used in the native fortifications. The sandstone, however, occurs in quarries about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the north-east, east of Denholm Hill Farm. The dressed stones now occur in position in the walling of the native work on the summit, and in its fallen remains scattered on the north and south sides of the hill; they have also been used in a modern field-dyke on the south slope. None, however, occur in the remains of the earlier native hill fort encircling the hill at a lower level. On the occasion of our visit in 1945 some thirty stones were measured and as many more noted. They range between $10\frac{3}{4}$ and $24\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, between $6\frac{1}{2}$ and 9 inches in height, and between 10 and 16 inches from back to front. The average size of the dressed face is 16 by $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Stones of this kind imply permanent building, and their limited quantity and random use imply also that they were not brought specially by the native builders for a particular structural function, but were found by them in the ruins of a Roman building actually upon the hill.

The incidence of the Roman stones also shows that the building occupied the summit, and what kind of Roman building is more likely to have occupied this position than a stone signal tower? The isolated stone signal towers in coursed masonry of the Cumberland coast² or on Gillalees Beacon³ come at once to mind.

In the light of this interpretation Roman arrangements for watching over Teviotdale would become more clear. This country, thick with native settlements, was evidently thought to need special attention. Signals by smoke or fire from Rubers Law would be visible from many points on Dere Street. The nearest point on the road is about Monteviot, but any fort that

¹ A. O. Curle, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xxxix (1905), pp. 219-232.

² Collingwood, *Transactions of the Cumb. and Westmorland Arch. Soc.*, vol. xxix (1929), pp. 138-65.

³ Richmond, *ibid.*, vol. xxxiii (1939), pp. 241-5.

may have existed there at the Teviot crossing was probably of small size, like that at Cappuck. To call out military forces in strength it would be necessary to signal northwards to Newstead, and southwards firstly to Chew Green, and from there along the road to High Rochester, Risingham, and eventually the line of the Wall. Rubers Law and Brownhart Law thus appear as part of the same system. From Brownhart Law a runner could take a message round the shoulder of the hill to Chew Green, and signals which went southwards from there need not be visible from the north, where the natives would thus be ignorant of the fact that Roman troops had been summoned or intelligence sent.

It may well be asked whether there was any provision for communication between Rubers Law and Newstead. At Newstead, the southward view is impeded by an adjacent low ridge. Air reconnaissance in 1947, however, disclosed a small square enclosure on Red Rig, half a mile south of the fort. This had been long ploughed out, but was revealed by the crop marking over its ditch, surrounding an area of about 150 by 170 feet. A V-shaped military ditch of Roman type, $12\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide and $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, was quickly located by a trial trench dug later that year by two men kindly lent by Dr Richmond, who was engaged in work upon the main fort. This post, though not within sight of Rubers Law, is well placed to watch for signals from the south and to relay them to the fort at Newstead, on lower ground beside the Tweed.