

## THE EXCAVATIONS AT LYNE, PEEBLESSHIRE, 1959-63

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### INTRODUCTION

THE Roman fort at Lyne, 4 miles W. of Peebles, was excavated under the auspices of this Society by Dr David Christison in 1901, and an account of the results, prefaced by a useful summary of earlier notices of the site, was published in these *Proceedings*.<sup>1</sup> Judged by the standards of the time the excavation was conspicuously successful. Exploratory trenching established the main lines of the defences, where these were no longer visible on the surface, and the positions of all the four gates were determined. Annexes were discovered on both the N. and S. sides, and within the fort a number of buildings were located and planned. It is greatly to the credit of the excavators that they recognised traces of both stone and timber buildings, as well as several minor structures since identified by Professor Richmond as belonging to the water-supply of the garrison.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, it would be too much to expect that the history of the fort should emerge clearly from a report written before James Curle's excavations at Newstead had provided a chronological framework for the Roman occupation of Scotland. In describing the relics found at Lyne, Dr Joseph Anderson drew attention to the fact that they were much less in quantity than those produced by the Society's excavations at Birrens, Ardoch and Camelon; and it is clear from the report that Christison himself thought only in terms of a single occupation. Subsequently, however, Macdonald pointed out that the pottery from Lyne included a scrap of first-century samian ware as well as pieces of second-century vessels,<sup>3</sup> and this disclosure suggested that, as happened so often in Scotland, the same site had served both the Flavian and Antonine garrisons. More recently, further complications have been introduced by the discovery on air photographs of two more Roman works in the vicinity. The first of these, a fortlet, was observed as a crop-mark by Dr St Joseph about 150 yds. N. of the fort (fig. 1(B) and Pl. XI: 1); while the other, a 3½-acre fort situated on the farm of Easter Happrew, on the S. side of the Lyne Water (fig. 1(D)), was revealed by crop-marks on National Survey photographs.

In 1956 the Easter Happrew fort was excavated by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland as part of the preparatory work for the forthcoming Inventory of Peeblesshire, and the results of this investigation<sup>4</sup> stressed the need for further exploration at Lyne itself. Since that date therefore small-scale excavations, directed towards limited objectives, have taken place on several occasions as the crop conditions allowed, and a stage has now been reached when it seems desirable to publish the findings. Through the good offices of the

<sup>1</sup> Vol. xxxv (1900-1), 154 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Proc. Class. Assoc.*, xxix, 16.

<sup>2</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, lxxv (1940-1), 39 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, xc (1956-7), 93 ff.

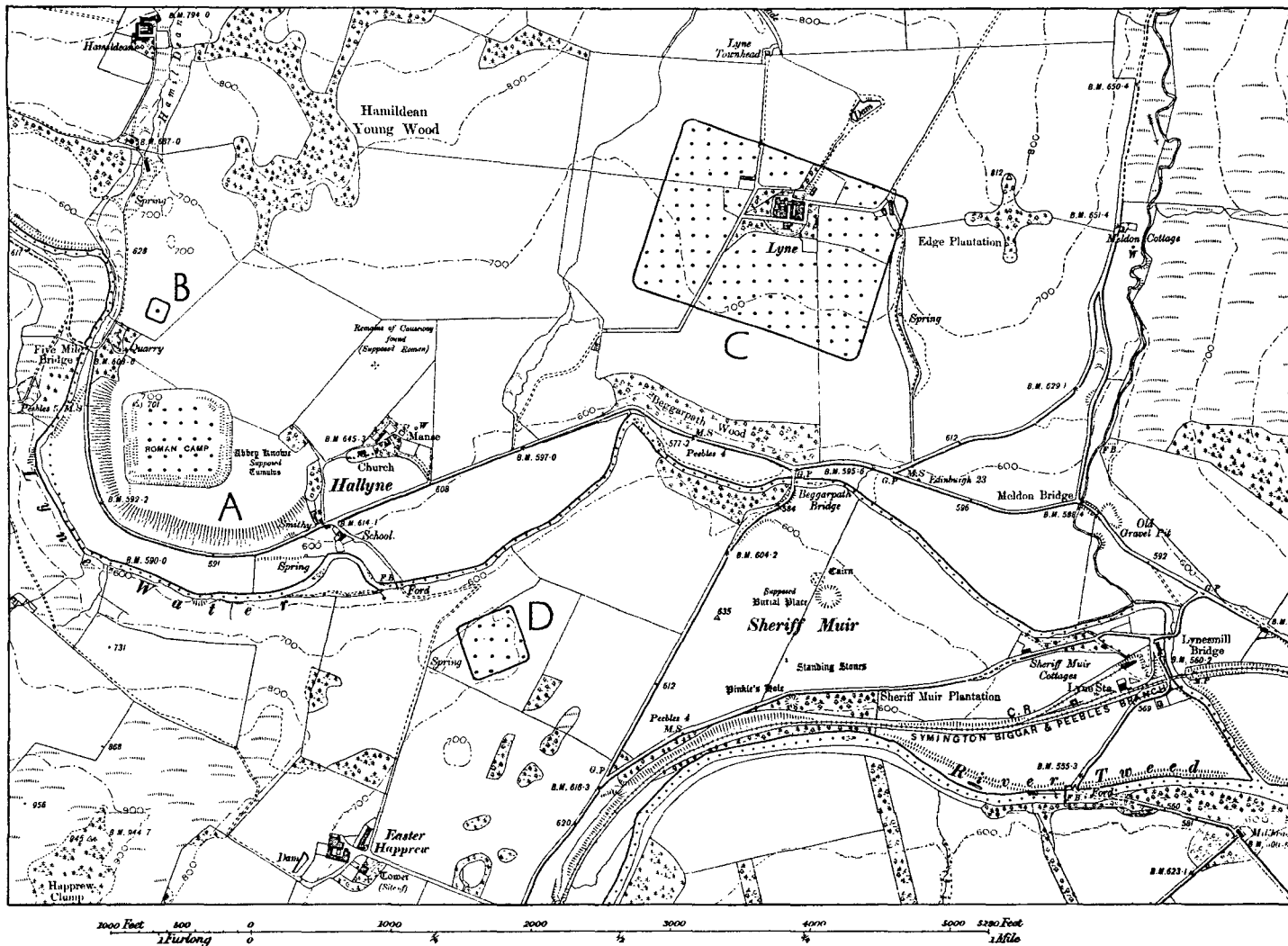


FIG. 1. Roman fort (A), fortlet (B), and temporary camp (C) at Lyne; Roman fort (D) at Easter Haprew. (Based upon the Ordnance Map, with the sanction of the Controller, H.M. Stationery Office)

Commission's Chairman, the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Wemyss and March, LL.D., J.P., permission to excavate was readily granted by the owners of the land, the Wemyss Landed Estates Company, and by Mr R. Waddell and the late Mr A. D. Scarth, successive tenants of Lyne farm. The fortlet is situated on the farm of Hamildean, and the Commissioners are indebted to Mr T. Dick for permission to examine it. The Society of Antiquaries generously contributed towards the cost of the work, while the Scottish Field School of Archaeology paid the expenses of two student helpers in 1959. Thanks are also due to Mr B. R. Hartley for his opinions on the fragments of decorated samian ware found in the course of the excavations; to Dr J. K. S. St Joseph and the Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography for permission to reproduce air photographs; to Mrs R. W. Feachem, Miss W. Simpson, Mr J. H. Hendrie, Mr A. MacLaren, and Mr G. Maxwell who shared with the tasks of supervision and survey-work; and to Mr I. G. Scott who made the drawings. Two of the drawings (figs. 1 and 2) have been reproduced by permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office from blocks made for the Peeblesshire Inventory.

#### THE FORT (figs. 1(A) and 2)

##### *The Defences*

A section (fig. 3) cut through the E. defences of the fort, 50 ft. N. of the E. gate, revealed only a single structural period. The rampart was 20 ft. thick at the base and survived to a maximum height of 3 ft.: it was built of turf and was retained on either side by a kerb composed of natural boulders (Pl. XII: 2). In front of the rampart there was a berm, 9 ft. in width, and then a small ditch, 9 ft. wide and 4 ft. deep. A road, surfaced with rammed gravel and revetted on the outer side by a clay cheek, occupied the full width of the berm, but underlying this there was a band of clay and cobble which had been laid in a trench dug in the subsoil, and which extended from the outer kerb of the rampart to within 18 in. of the scarp of the ditch. The purpose of the clay and cobble was not immediately apparent. As the road did not require a foundation of this kind, it seemed possible that it represented the underpinning of an earlier rampart which had been dismantled when the existing rampart was constructed. But this interpretation was not convincing, since the inner ditch showed no sign of re-cutting, nor was there the slightest trace of rampart material between the clay and cobble layer and the road. Moreover, no similar layer was present in a control trench cut across the berm 60 ft. to the S. of the E. gate, and none has been observed on any of the other three sides of the fort. It was, therefore, necessary to look to the section itself to provide some indication of the purpose of this purely local feature, and a possible explanation emerged as the work proceeded. For when the section was completely excavated it could be seen that at this point the rampart had been carried through a slight natural hollow, the floor of which sloped gradually downwards towards the ditch. Behind the rampart the hollow had been filled with rammed earth and stones to secure a level bed for the *intervallum* road and for the E. wall of the adjacent timber building. It is reasonable to suppose therefore that the clay and cobble was laid at the same time, during the initial preparation of

LYNE

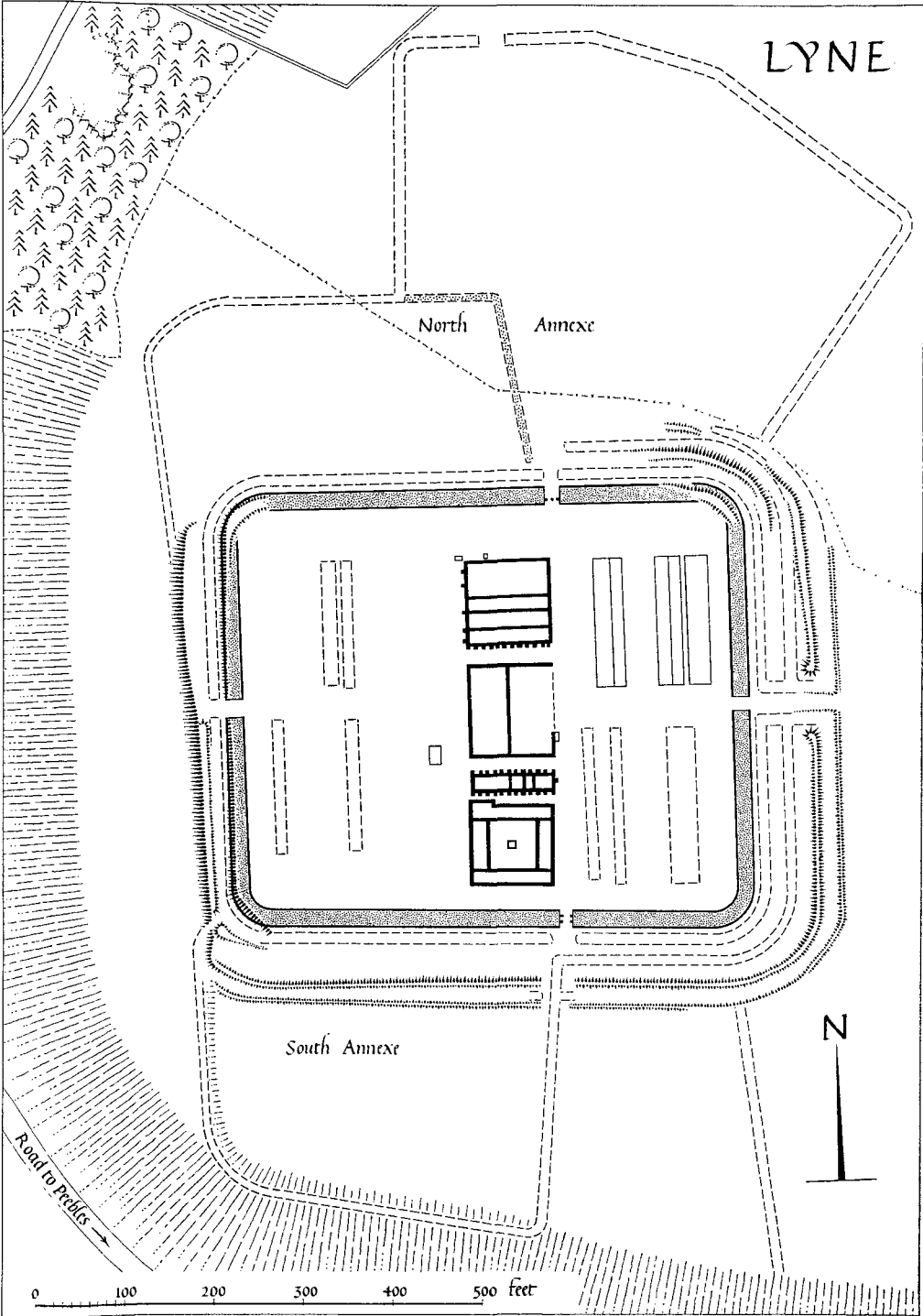


FIG. 2. The Roman fort at Lyne

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the site and before the inner ditch had been dug, as a precaution against settlement which might threaten the stability of the rampart.

Beyond the inner ditch there were two more ditches, V-shaped in section and with indications of a square drainage channel at the bottom in each case. Both of them had been dug to a depth of 5 ft. into the subsoil, but had been rendered more formidable by the addition of carefully constructed mounds along their margins. Except at the NE. corner of the fort, the mounds bordering the medial ditch have been completely levelled by cultivation, but those that accompany the outer ditch are still remarkably well-preserved along both the E. and S. fronts (fig. 2). The section disclosed that they were built of the tough boulder clay that occurs sporadically on the site, and the inner one had been capped with rough boulders on the inner side, presumably as a protection against weathering (Pl. XII: 1).<sup>1</sup> The effect of the marginal mounds was to increase the width of the outer ditch to 26 ft. and the depth to about 8 ft., while the medial ditch must have been very similar in size. None of the three ditches showed any sign of re-cutting or of deliberate filling: on the contrary it was evident that they had all been open at the time when the fort was abandoned, and that after rapid silt had formed in the bottom they had filled up gradually during the long cultivation of the site.

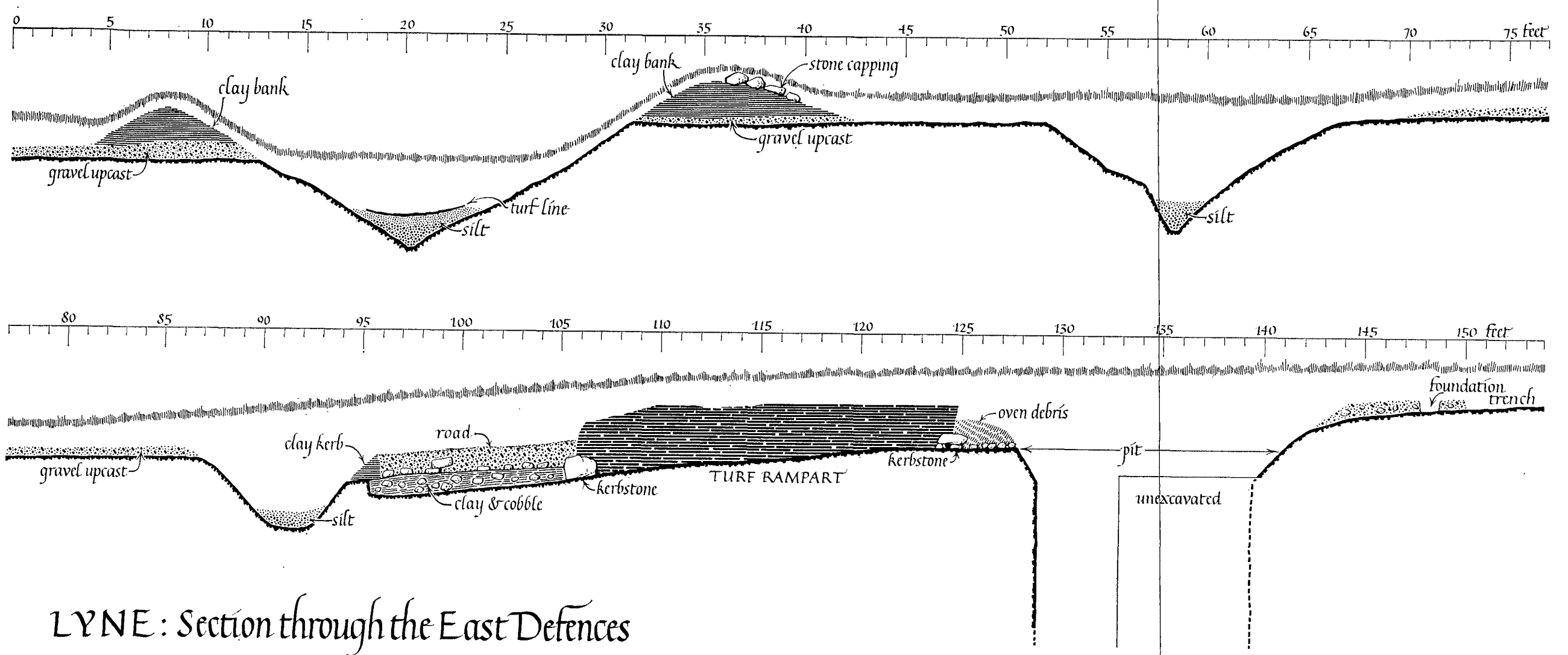
Immediately behind the rampart there was a small heap of burnt clay and ash from a nearby oven, but in place of the *intervallum* road there was a large pit measuring across the top 14 ft. from E. to W. by at least 8 ft. transversely. The attempt to reach the bottom had to be abandoned at a depth of 13 ft. from the present surface, when the sides showed signs of collapse and the shoring necessary to continue the operation could not be assembled in the time available. Thus, although there is no reason to think that the pit is not of Roman date, it is uncertain whether it was a demolition pit, similar to those found at Inchtuthil and Bar Hill, or whether it originally held a wooden storage tank which was dismantled when the fort was evacuated. The only relics found in the filling were a few scraps of an *amphora*. Since the best hope of dating the defences lay in the recovery of pottery from the cooking places at the tail of the rampart, a cross-trench was dug southwards from the pit for a distance of 20 ft., at which point it made contact with an *ascensus*. This was not completely uncovered, but consisted of a turf platform bonded into the rampart and supported round the edges on a rough stone foundation 3 ft. thick. Between the pit and the *ascensus* the *intervallum* road, here 20 ft. wide, abutted against the kerb of the rampart so that the ovens must have been set into the back of the rampart itself. As anticipated, a number of sherds were found on the surface of the road in the lee of the rampart. They were as follows:

*Samian Ware:*

- (a) Form 37. Rim with a large ovolo used only by CETTUS, formerly known as the Small S Potter (CGP,<sup>2</sup> fig. 42, 2). CETTUS is thought not to have begun work before A.D. 160, or even A.D. 170.

<sup>1</sup> Compare the stone pitching on the face of the rampart of the South Camp at Birrenswark (*ibid.*, xxxiii (1898-9), 222 and Pl. V).

<sup>2</sup> Stanfield, J. A., and Simpson, Grace, *Central Gaulish Potters*.



LYNE: Section through the East Defences

FIG. 3

- (b) Form 37. Four fragments from another bowl in the style of CETTVS which should also be late Antonine in date. The individual motifs are all illustrated in *CGP*, Pls. 141-4.
- (c) Form 37 with CINNAMVS ovolo 1. This ovolo was probably in use for a long time, but is unlikely to have been introduced before A.D. 150. It is fairly common in the Pennine forts held between c. A.D. 160 and 196.
- (d) Form 37 with freestyle decoration possibly by CINNAMVS. Antonine, but not datable more closely within the period.
- (e) Form 31. Footring, probably late Antonine.

*Coarse Ware:*

- (a) A flat-rimmed dish in black-burnished fabric with lattice decoration (Type 308).<sup>1</sup>
- (b) A bowl with a down-turned rim in black-burnished fabric with lattice decoration (Type 222).
- (c) A rough-cast beaker (Type 75).
- (d) A cooking-pot in black-burnished fabric with a tall rim and a wavy line below the neck (Type 129).
- (e) A short-rimmed cooking-pot in grey fabric (Type 117 but undecorated).

All the sherds in the group are of Antonine date, and it will be observed that the samian pieces are predominantly late Antonine. Since the defences exhibited only a single structural period, it must therefore be concluded that the fort was built at the time of the late Antonine reoccupation of Scotland, immediately following the Brigantian revolt of A.D. 155-8.

*The Interior*

The section through the defences described in the preceding paragraphs was continued westwards across the *praetentura* of the fort. In addition to the two timber buildings detected by their foundation-trenches in this area in 1901, a third was discovered between them, separated by a narrow alley from the easternmost of the pair. Two of the buildings, measuring 33 ft. and 28 ft. in breadth respectively, were divided longitudinally by partition walls and were probably barracks, while the third, which fronted on to the *intervallum* road, may have been a stable. All these buildings were clearly contemporary and nowhere in this half of the *praetentura* was there any hint of more than one period of occupation. Similarly, only a single set of foundations was found in the headquarters-building, which was examined in a trench cut parallel to, and 10 ft. inside, its N. wall. Although the walls themselves have been almost entirely demolished, a good deal of the red sandstone ashlar of which they were composed was encountered in the trench. The most likely source for this stone is Blyth Muir, 4½ miles to the NW. of Lyne, where there are a number of quarries in the Lower Old Red Sandstone rock, some of which appear to have been out of use for a considerable period.

<sup>1</sup> The references are to 'Types of Roman Coarse Pottery Vessels in Northern Britain' by Gillam, J. P., in *Archaeologia Aeliana*, xxxv, 1 ff.

*The North Gate*

On the plan made in 1901 the gap in the ditch on the N. side of the fort does not correspond with the gateway in the rampart, and it is stated in the report<sup>1</sup> that the section of ditch opposite the gate had been deliberately filled at some time to allow direct access through the defences. It seemed possible, therefore, that two structural periods were represented here, the gate having been moved eastwards during a drastic reconstruction of the fort, but a trench cut through the supposed gap in the ditch in 1963, and continued southwards across the rampart, showed that this was not in fact the case. Not only was there no sign of an earlier gate or roadway underlying the rampart at this point, but the 'gap' itself was illusory, the ditch continuing across it. In fairness to the previous excavators, it should be said, however, that the ditch had been heavily reduced by ploughing hereabouts, only the heel, which measured 4 ft. wide and 15 in. deep, remaining intact. The rampart was the same width as on the E. side and was similarly supported on either side by a narrow kerb composed of angular boulders. But the core, consisting of mixed earth and turf, was less homogeneous than in the section previously described, and it was interesting to observe that it was retained at the back by a clay capping precisely in the manner of the Antonine Wall at Mumrills.<sup>2</sup>

*The North Annexe*

Air photographs taken by Dr St Joseph,<sup>3</sup> one of which is reproduced as Pl. XI: 2, revealed the crop-mark of a hitherto unrecorded polygonal annexe, rather more than 3 acres in area, on the N. side of the fort. Enclosed by a single ditch, it extends into ground which was previously considered to have been a morass in Roman times,<sup>4</sup> and has an entrance in the N. side through which a track no doubt led to join the road from Newstead to Castledykes. The E. ditch of the annexe joins the fort defences at the NE. corner, while on the W. it unites with the N. side of the small annexe discovered in 1901. But the relationship between the two annexes is not disclosed by the photographs in question, for although both the N. and W. sides of the smaller annexe are visible there is no trace of the E. side or of the NE. corner.

Excavation showed that the smaller annexe was built first, and that it was subsequently enlarged by the addition of the polygonal extension, the intervening stretch of ditch being deliberately filled up. The compactness of the filling, which consisted of rammed gravel, explains why this sector of the ditch no longer registers as a crop-mark. The ditch of the original annexe measured 8 ft. in width and 4 ft. in depth, while the ditch of the extension was somewhat larger, measuring 13 ft. in width and 6 ft. in depth. No datable material occurred in the primary silt of either ditch, although three scraps of a second-century cooking-pot were found on top of the silt and beneath the rammed gravel of the filled sector. Some traces of rampart material, consisting of mixed turf and sandy earth, were observed in the bottom of the extension ditch, but the rampart itself had been completely removed by cultivation.

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, 177.

<sup>2</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, xciv (1960-1), 95.

<sup>3</sup> See especially Nos. AAJ 96-7 and ADU 40-1 in the Cambridge University Collection of air photographs.

<sup>4</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, xxxv (1900-1), fig. 7.



*The South Annexe*

No excavation was undertaken on the S. side of the fort, but probing confirmed that the medial ditch is absent to the W. of the S. gate, and also that the E. ditch of the annexe joins the defences precisely in the manner shown on the plan of 1901. The narrow zigzag passage thus created between fort and annexe might be thought at first glance to be the result of reconstruction, but this is not necessarily so since the S. gate was a minor one and possessed only a single portal. An unrecorded ditch which runs southwards from the SE. corner of the defences may, however, be a secondary addition, comparable to the annexe extension on the N. of the fort. Appearing as a crop-mark on air photographs, it is easily located by probing, while a pronounced, water-scoured hollow marks its point of junction with the edge of the plateau.

## THE FORTLET (fig. 1(B) and Pl. XI:1)

The fortlet is situated on a slight rise 160 yds. N. of the fort, and on the edge of the steep slope, some 70 ft. in height, that borders the left bank of the Lyne Water at this point. It is thus better placed than the fort for observation westwards up the valley of the Lyne Water, having an uninterrupted view of nearly  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles, and is also closer to the presumed line of the Roman road from Newstead to Castledykes which probably crossed the Hamil Dean burn in the neighbourhood of Bench-Mark 687.<sup>1</sup>

The fortlet was under rig-and-furrow cultivation in Roy's<sup>2</sup> day and, as he makes no mention of it, it had presumably been already obliterated by that time. Excavation showed that it was square on plan with rounded corners and measured about 90 ft. each way within a rampart and a single ditch. The rampart, probably of turf, has been completely ploughed away, but staining observed on the natural gravel subsoil immediately to the E. of the SW. corner suggested that it was about 20 ft. in thickness. Cultivation has also reduced the ditch to a mere heel, 5 ft. wide and 18 in. deep, on the N., E. and S. sides, while on the W. side, if it ever existed, it has been totally destroyed by erosion of the margin of the plateau. Where it survives, the ditch is 15 in. below the present ground surface and is filled with fine dark soil.

The entrance to the fortlet is in the centre of the N. side, facing the Roman road. The gap in the ditch, at present 23 ft. in width, has probably been enlarged by the ploughing out of the last few feet of the ditch-terminal on the E., and the original width of the causeway is likely to have been about 15 ft. Owing to the severe denudation of the site, and the consequent destruction of the Roman levels, it was not considered worth while to explore the interior.

## THE TEMPORARY CAMP

Mention must also be made of a temporary camp revealed by crop-marks on air

<sup>1</sup> For this road, see *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXVII (1952-3), 63 ff. The road marked on Roy's plan of Lyne (*Military Antiquities*, Pl. XXVIII) is not however entitled 'Roman road', as stated in that paper, but is simply the eighteenth-century road from Peebles to Kirkurd. Nevertheless, the two roads appear to have followed more or less the same course in the vicinity of Lyne.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.*, Pl. XXVIII.

photographs<sup>1</sup> at the farm of Lyne, three-quarters of a mile ENE. of the fort (fig. 1(c)). The camp measures 1700 ft. from E. to W. by 1250 ft. from N. to S. and encloses an area of 49 acres. Three gates are visible, one in the centre of the E. side and two in the S. side, and it can be assumed that there were originally three more in corresponding positions in the other two sides.

#### CONCLUSIONS

In the report on the excavations undertaken at Easter Happrew in 1956 it was concluded that the fort was built by Agricola's troops in A.D. 81, and that it was replaced by a new station at Lyne some five years later, at a time when the Roman defences in the N. of Britain were being drastically reorganised.<sup>2</sup> It was also suggested that the change of site could best be explained on the assumption that the Roman road that ran from Newstead to Castledykes by way of the Lyne valley was laid down in the course of this late Domitianic reorganisation. For local topography decreed that the road should follow the N. bank of the Lyne Water at least as far W. as the inflow of the West Happrew Burn, and rather than build a bridge at Easter Happrew it would be reasonable to transfer the garrison from the S. bank to a new site across the river.

This tentative reconstruction of events has subsequently received additional support from the discovery that the piece of first-century samian ware found at Lyne during the 1901 excavations is of late Domitianic date.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand it must be confessed that no structural remains of the postulated second Flavian fort have so far been identified. The supposition that its defences more or less coincided with those of the Antonine fort,<sup>4</sup> as for example at Newstead and Cappuck, was disproved by the recent excavations, and no indications of an earlier fort on a different alignment can be seen on the many air photographs of the site that have been taken for the Cambridge University Collection or in the course of the National Air Survey. This negative evidence is not, however, conclusive, since, as we found in the case of the N. annexe, defences which have been deliberately levelled may escape detection even when crop conditions are entirely favourable. And in fact most of the air photographs have been taken when the field in question was in rough pasture, which does not normally register buried features. With the co-operation of the late Mr A. D. Scarth, the latter handicap was removed in 1961, and again in 1962, when the ground inside, and immediately adjacent to, the Antonine fort was ploughed up and sown with a white crop; and Dr St Joseph kindly included the site in his air reconnaissance programme in both those years. Unfortunately, bad weather seriously retarded the ripening of the crop on each occasion, and the photographs added nothing to existing knowledge. The possibility must of course be borne in mind that the second Flavian period is represented by the fortlet that lies to the N. of the Antonine fort, with its single entrance facing the Newstead-Castledykes road. As long as the fortlet is undated, this explanation cannot be entirely discounted: but it

<sup>1</sup> Nos. AAK 28 and DK 19-21 in the Cambridge University Collection; National Survey prints F 21 82/RAF/1270, 68-69.

<sup>2</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, xc (1956-7), 101.

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Mr B. R. Hartley, F.S.A., for this information. The sherd in question (No. FR 271) is a late South Gaulish form 37 made c. A.D. 85-105.

<sup>4</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, Lxxv (1940-1), 40.

seems to be improbable for two reasons. In the first place, although its find-spot is not recorded, the late Domitianic sherd discovered in 1901 is unlikely to have come from the vicinity of the fortlet since no excavations were made on Hamildean ground in that year. Secondly, although Flavian fortlets are not unknown,<sup>1</sup> the majority of the roadside posts of this kind found in southern Scotland date to the Antonine period.<sup>2</sup>

The case for assigning an Antonine date to the fortlet is strengthened by the fact that the fort itself exhibits only one of the two Antonine periods found at the neighbouring stations of Newstead and Castledykes. This conclusion emerges unequivocally from the evidence of the defences and the internal buildings alike, and it is not shaken by the fact that two structural phases were distinguished in the annexe. For as the original annexe was not replaced in the second phase, but simply enlarged, the change does not necessarily connote a break in the occupation of the site. As has already been stated (*supra*, p. 213), the character of the pottery found behind the E. rampart implies that the fort was built in the late Antonine period, probably *c.* A.D. 158. Although little more than one-third the size of the contemporary fort at Newstead, it is larger than most auxiliary forts in Scotland, measuring internally 544 ft. from E. to W. by 450 ft. from N. to S. The identity of the garrison has not been revealed by any inscription, and until more is known about the timber buildings<sup>3</sup> its composition cannot be accurately determined. The size of the enclosure, 5.6 acres, is however appropriate to a *cohors milliaria equitata*, while the presence of a mounted contingent is also implied by the wide streets and by the fact that the relics recovered in 1901 included part of a horseshoe.

The results of the Commission's work at Lyne and Easter Happlew may therefore be expressed as follows:

Flavian I	Easter Happlew fort
Flavian II	Unidentified or Lyne fortlet
Antonine I	? Lyne fortlet
Antonine II	Lyne fort

The date of the temporary camp at Lyne is unknown, although it will be observed that the gates are not protected by *claviculae*, which seem to have gone out of fashion by the second century A.D., but by simple traverses (*tutuli*). It is also worth noting that the occupation of the late Antonine fort may have been of relatively short duration. The excavators of 1901 commented on the paucity of the relics recovered from the site, and, apart from the group of sherds discovered in the cooking area behind the E. rampart, the yield of small finds from the 1959-63 excavations was meagre in the extreme. Only a single scrap of pottery was discovered in the trench cut across the *praetentura* of the fort, and a careful search for relics in both the fort and annexe immediately after the ground had been ploughed was completely unrewarding. In these circumstances it is difficult to believe that the fort was tenanted for more

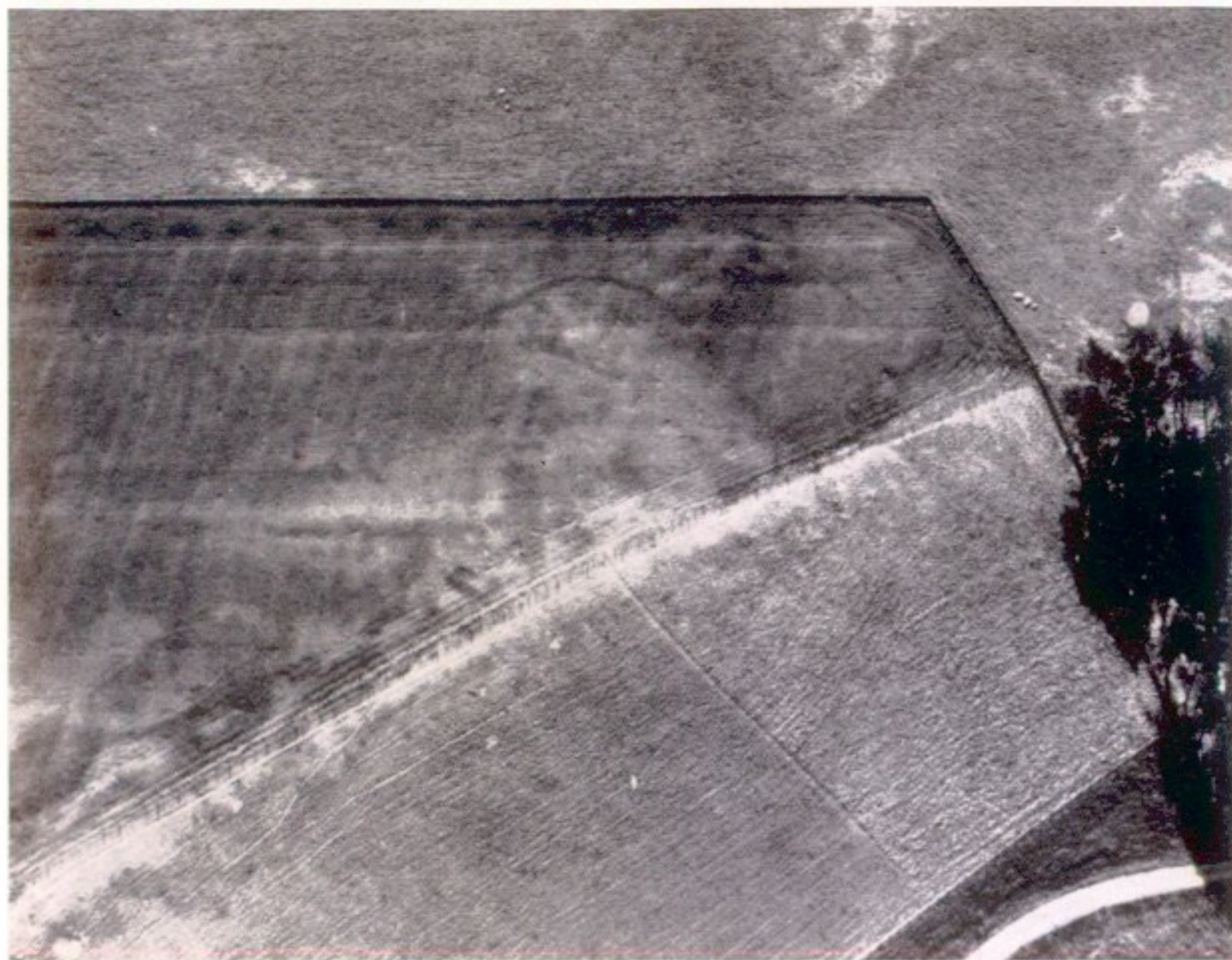
<sup>1</sup> e.g. at Newstead (*R.C.A.H.M., Roxburghshire*, II, 320).

<sup>2</sup> cf. *The Roman Occupation of South-western Scotland* (ed. Miller), 218 ff.

<sup>3</sup> The recent excavations revealed that the two timber buildings identified in the northern half of the *praetentura* of the fort in 1901 had not been surveyed with complete accuracy. Since they have not been tested, the rest of the timber buildings found in 1901 have, therefore, been marked on the present plan (fig. 2) in broken line.

than a few years. Certainly if it was built in A.D. 158 it can hardly have been actively in occupation as late as the barbarian invasion that is thought to have terminated the second Antonine period on the Antonine Wall, early in the reign of Commodus.

*The Society is indebted to H.M. Treasury for  
meeting the cost of the illustrations to this paper*



*Photo J. K. St Joseph*

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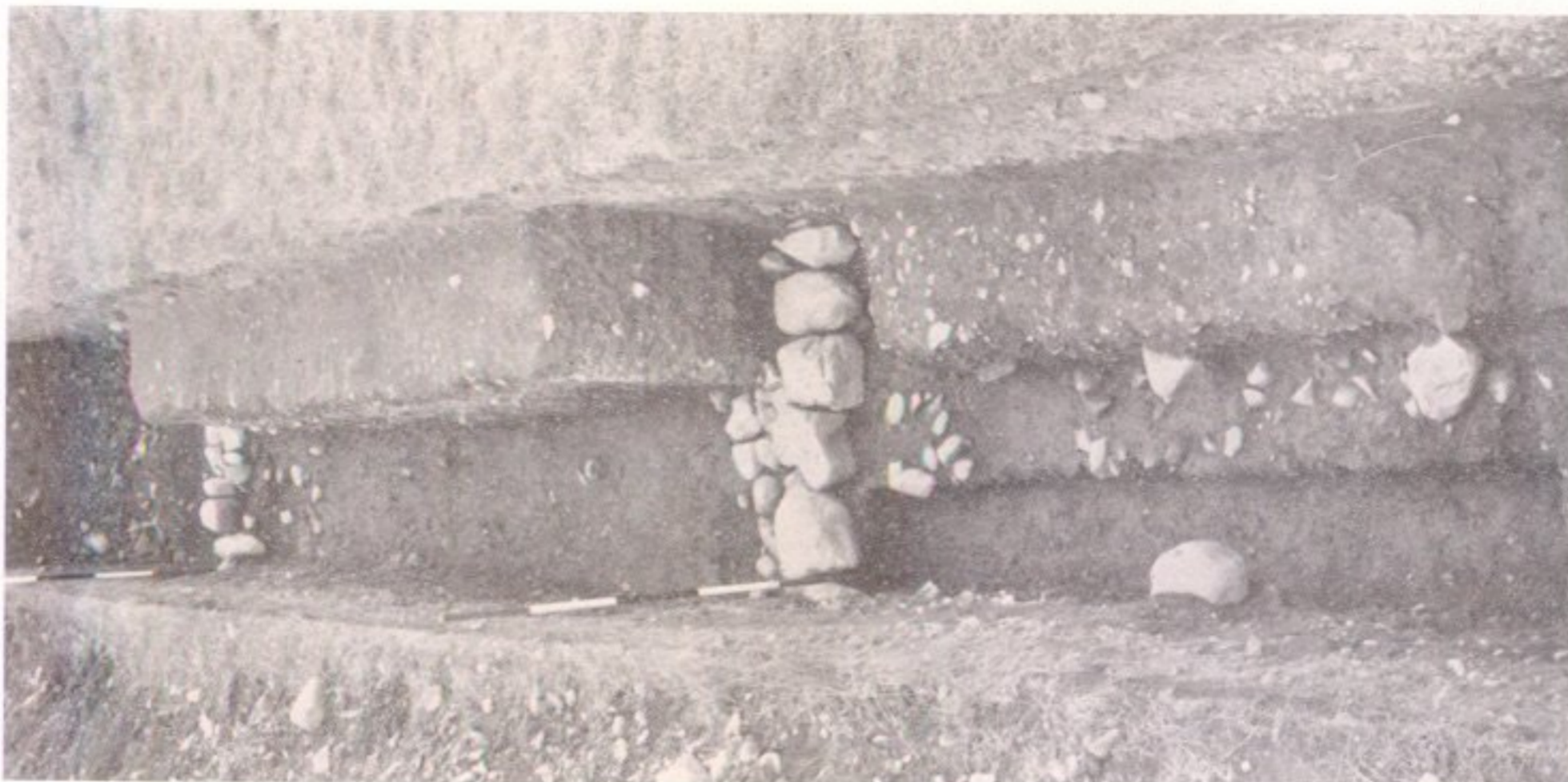
1. The Roman fortlet at Lyne, shown as a crop-mark. Air-view from the west



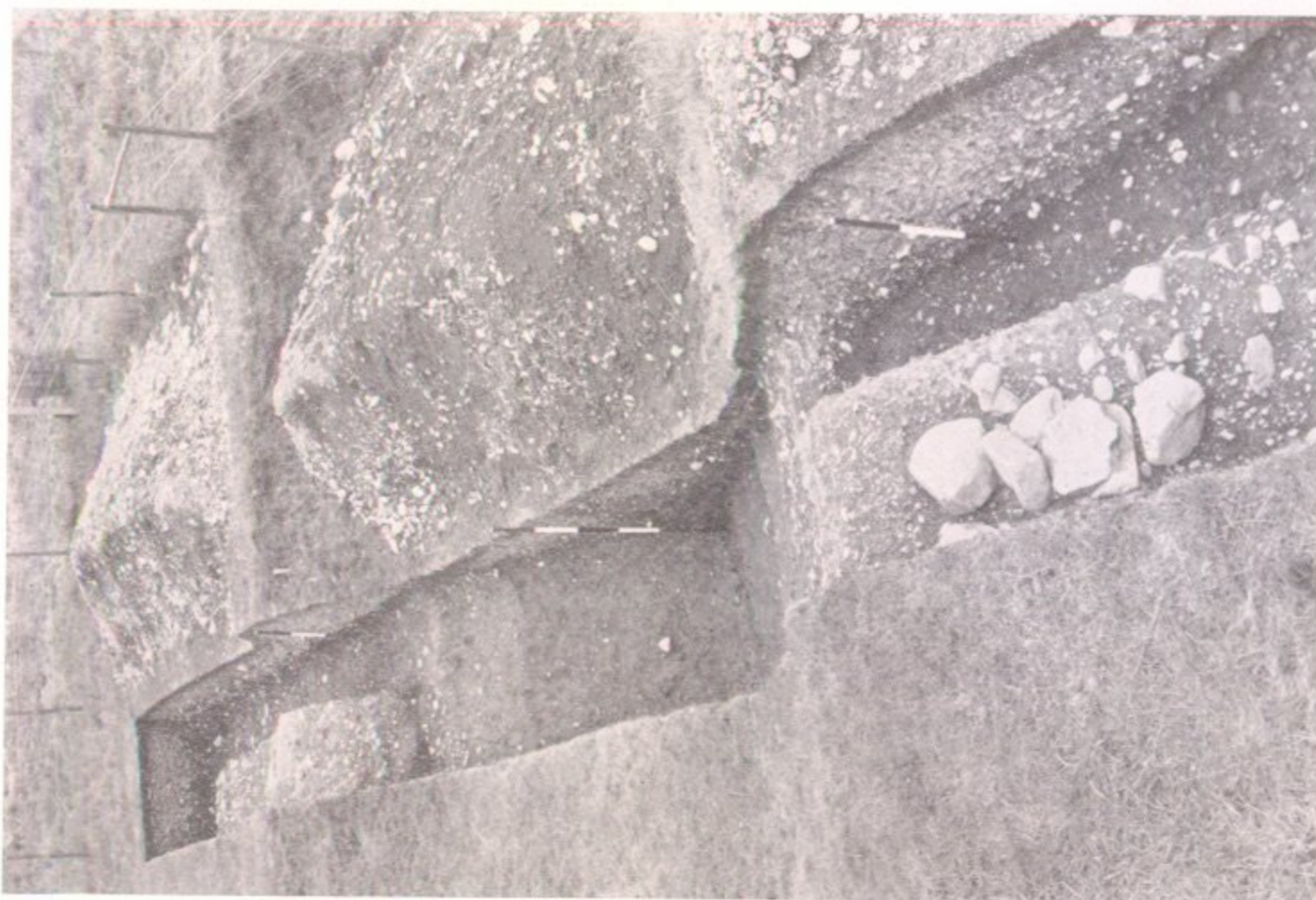
*Photo J. K. St Joseph*

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2. The enlarged north annexe of the Roman fort, shown as a crop-mark



*Photo R.C.A.H.M.S. Crown Copyright*  
2. View of the east rampart from outside the fort, showing the retaining kerbs and the gravel road overlying the clay and cobble layer on the berm



*Photo R.C.A.H.M.S. Crown Copyright*  
1. The outer ditch and marginal mounds on the east side of the fort