

MISCELLANEA ROMANO-CALEDONICA

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I. THE ANTONINE WALL AND FORT AT KIRKINTILLOCH, 1952-61

IN the years 1952-61 trenches were cut, under the auspices of the Hunterian Museum, at various points within the burgh of Kirkintilloch, as opportunity offered, and non-archaeological excavations were carefully watched, with the aim of establishing the exact line of the Antonine Wall, previously uncertain, between the canal, near John Street, Hillhead, and the western end of Kirkintilloch, near Adamslee. Also, by kind permission of the Town Council of Kirkintilloch, trenches were cut at intervals between 1953 and 1961 in the Peel Park, in the hope of locating an Antonine Wall fort.

In 1952, trenching in 'Scott's Back' behind the row of shops on the east side of the Cowgate, failed to reveal any remains of either the Antonine Wall or Ditch. A similar negative result was obtained from trenches cut in ground behind shops on the west side of the Cowgate, and to the south of the Auld Kirk of Kirkintilloch. This was confirmed when in 1959 the area on the west side of the Cowgate was excavated to a considerable depth during the construction of a new branch of Boots the Chemists. The excavations revealed no sign of either Wall or Ditch, although they went so deep that if the Ditch had ever been present in this area, it would have shown in section. It seemed probable that the line of Wall and Ditch lay further north than anticipated,¹ on the brow of the hill, passing under, or just north of, the Auld Kirk of Kirkintilloch.

In 1953, excavation began in the Peel Park, west of the Auld Kirk, with the joint aims of discovering the Wall and Ditch, and of locating the fort which, according to tradition, stood in what is now the Park. The early antiquaries, indeed, with almost complete unanimity,² accepted the Peel itself as the remains of the Roman fort, and supposed that it projected, surprisingly, north into enemy country from the line of the Antonine Wall, which, they believed, lay to the south of the Peel.

Sir George Macdonald effectively demolished this view by pointing out that the Peel was in fact the site of a medieval castle or stronghold, dating back probably to about the twelfth century A.D., but certainly not of Roman origin.³ Sir George himself attempted to find some clue to the location of an Antonine Wall fort by cutting a few trenches to the south of the Peel in July 1914, but his work was interrupted by the outbreak of the 1914-18 War. It was probably this interruption which prevented him from leaving a plan of the exact position of his trenches, although his published report of the excavations makes it clear that he did find traces of Roman occupation somewhere within the Park to the south of the Peel.⁴

¹ cf. Sir George Macdonald, *The Roman Wall in Scotland* (1934), 152.

² cf. Gibson's *Camden* (1695), 959; Gordon, A., *Itin. Sept.* (1726), 54; Horsley, J., *Brit. Rom.* (1732), 168 f.; Roy, W., *Milit. Ant.* (1793), 159.

³ *op. cit.*, 289 ff.

⁴ *P.S.A.S.*, LIX (1924-5), 290 ff.

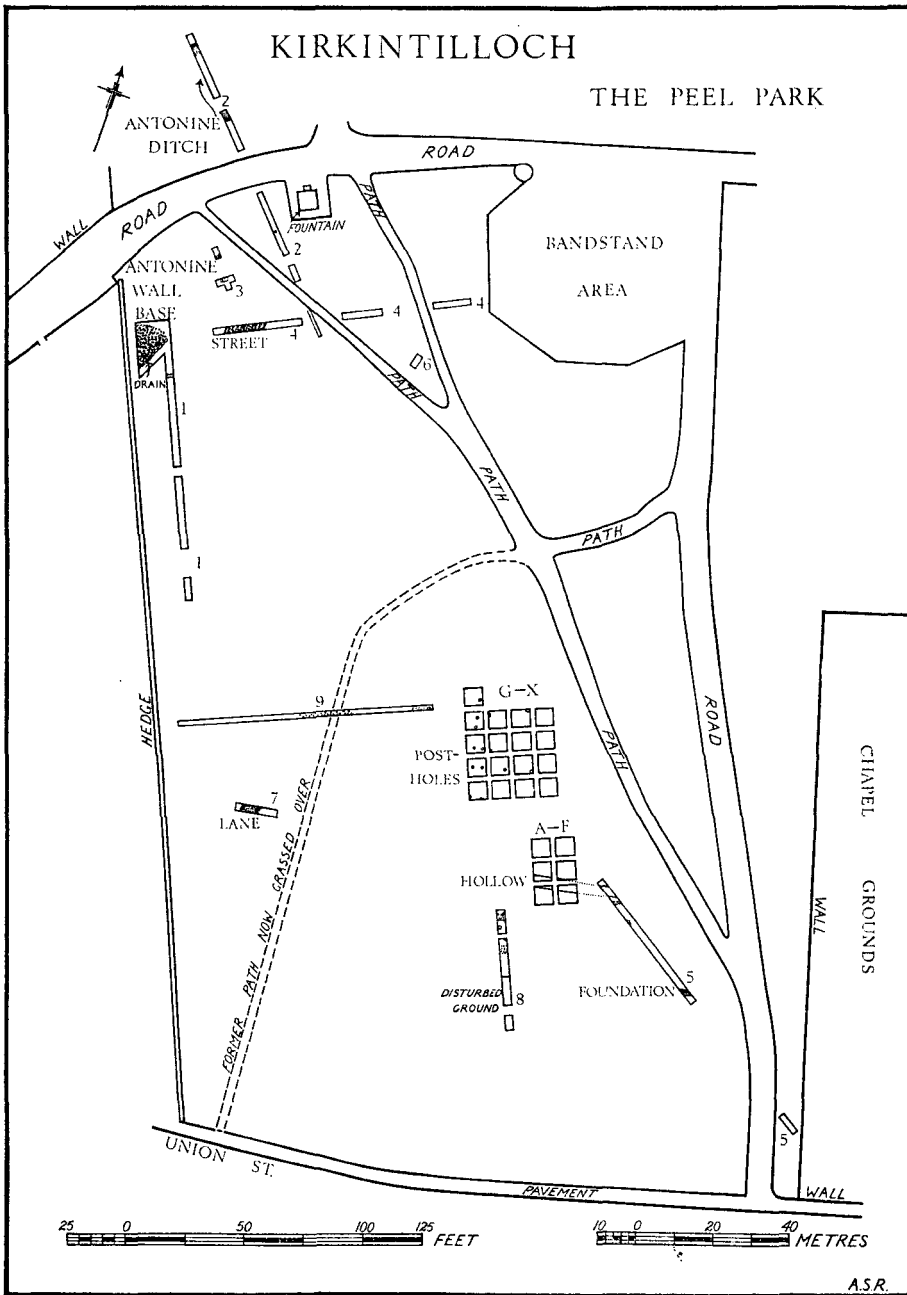


FIG. 1

In 1953, a long trench (Trench 1) was cut from north to south, near the western boundary hedge of the Park, far enough west, it was hoped, to be outside the area of medieval occupation. (This area, it is known, originally extended much farther westward than does the present Peel mound.) The trench, 110 ft. long, with two short unexcavated portions, also extended far enough south to pick up the line of the Antonine Wall and Ditch, had this lain to the south of the Peel as the early antiquaries suggested (fig. 1). At the extreme north end of Trench 1 the south kerb of a massive stone foundation was uncovered. An area was later opened up to reveal more of this foundation, and by 1961 the area was provided by the Town Council with a handsome railing and an explanatory brass plate.

Within the railed area, there survives a width of 12 ft. of the massive stone foundation, including its south kerb of large stones with squared outer faces. The north kerb was not preserved but in the side of the area there was distinguished the foundation trench of the stone base, cut into the sandy clay subsoil with Roman humus on top. This trench indicated a width of about 15 ft. for the base when intact. Over the surviving stones of the base there still stood decayed turf, to a maximum height of 1 ft.

In this area there was present part of a drain or culvert, constructed, clearly, at the time when the south kerb of the base was laid, and intended to run across the base at an angle. The entrance to the culvert was flanked by two of the kerb-stones, set exactly 1 ft. apart. These stood upon a flat stone which served as the culvert floor, and which ended flush with the outer face of the kerb. The culvert was roofed by large flat stones, with gaps between them plugged by smaller stones and, apparently, some clay packing.

The width and massive character of the stone base, and the incorporation in it of a well-constructed culvert suggested that it was the foundation of the Antonine Wall. It ran from south-west to north-east, and at a distance of about 30 ft. to the north of it there was found the Antonine Ditch, with a width of about 35 ft. (Trench 2). Its depth could not be determined owing to disturbance of the ground by a modern post, and by a drain or gutter.

It was clear that the north-easterly direction of the Antonine Wall and Ditch could not have been maintained for any great distance north of Trench 2 or they would have been carried over the brow of the hill into enemy country. Trenching to the east of Trench 1 revealed no substantial remains of the stone base (Trenches 2, 3). There survived only a few scattered stones, three of which, in the southern section of Trench 3, may have been kerb-stones. The Ditch could not be followed east, since the ground east of Trench 2 has been terraced away during the laying-out of the Peel Park.

A trench cut at right angles to Trench 1 on the line of the stone base disclosed a cobbled street. Its edges were broken away, but in its surviving form it was about 16 ft. wide and running at a distance of about 14 ft. from the stone base, and roughly in the same direction from south-west to north-east (Trench 4).

Trench 4 was continued eastwards, with two interruptions where there were paths in the Park, in the hope of finding buildings. The continuations of Trench

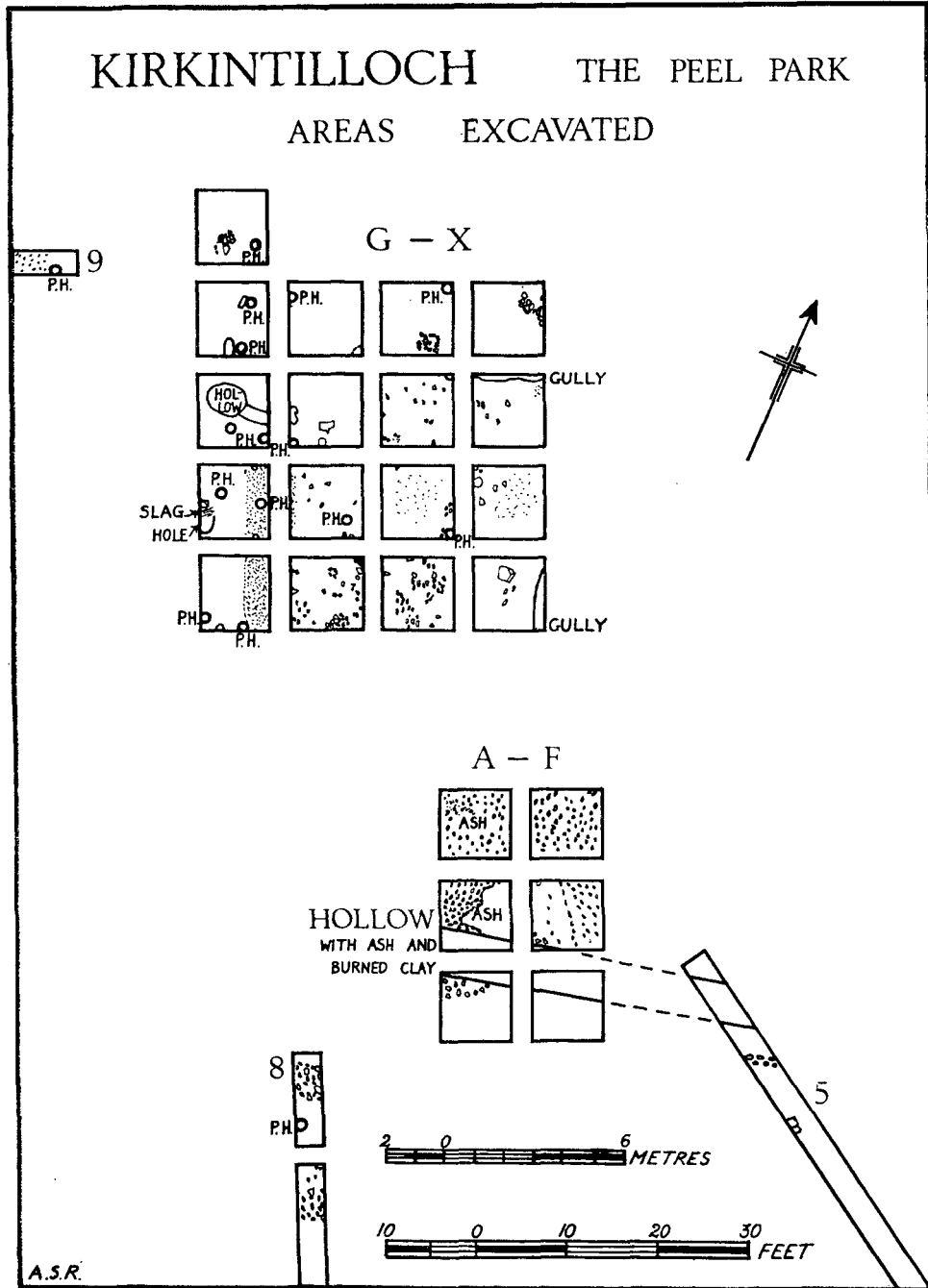


FIG. 2

4, however, and another small trench (Trench 6) dug to the south of them, proved unrewarding, for although excavated to a depth of 6 ft. they failed to reach undisturbed soil. They were in fact filled with artificial soil and rubbish including several medieval potsherds and much modern material. These trenches were obviously on the site of some deep depression which had at some time been filled in and levelled up. It seemed possible that the depression had been the western moat of the medieval Peel mound. The medieval occupation of the mound and the ground to west of it must have disturbed and destroyed any Roman remains which were formerly there.

Accordingly a trench was cut well to the south of the Peel, near the south-eastern limit of the Park. Evidence of Roman occupation was discovered in the form of a hollow filled with ash and containing rim and side fragments of a coarse fumed bowl, of Antonine date, many large stones which must have come from a foundation or road, traces of a street, and a clay and cobble foundation, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. wide. From loose soil in Trench 5 came scraps of bone, pieces of Roman tile, amphora fragments and a mortarium rim, also of Antonine date. Trench 5 was evidently within a Roman occupied area which must therefore have extended south-eastwards from the stone base in Trench 1 for at least 350 ft., and probably for much more.

Finally in 1953, a short trench (Trench 7) was cut near the western boundary hedge of the Peel Park, south of Trench 1. It revealed a narrow cobbled lane about 8 ft. wide, probably a lane or alley between buildings. From soil above the cobbled lane came an iron bolt, scraps of glass, tile fragments, and two mortarium rim fragments of Antonine date.

The wide distribution over the Peel Park of the Roman remains found in 1953 suggested that they belonged to a fort or fort-annexe of considerable size, whose defences (apart from those on the north) might well have lain outside the Park altogether. It seemed likely that in place of further trenching, the opening up of areas within the southern part of the Park might give more exact information about the alignment and character of buildings.

Accordingly a series of 8 ft. squares, twenty-three in all, A-X, were opened up at various periods in 1955, 1960 and 1961, by agreement with the Parks Department of Kirkintilloch Town Council, whose generous co-operation is most gratefully acknowledged. The excavations of 1955 were carried out by adult students of the Glasgow University extra-mural class in Roman Archaeology, and by Scottish university students attending by arrangement with the Scottish Field School of Archaeology. The direction of the Scottish Field School excavations was shared by Mr R. G. Livens, now Lecturer in Archaeology at the University College of North Wales, Bangor.

In the excavation of the areas A-X, there came to light a number of post-holes in several rows, running east and west, with, to south of them, cobbling and a hollow about $4\frac{1}{2}$ ft. wide and 3 ft. deep on the same alignment as the post-holes (fig. 2). Within the limits covered by the post-holes (in areas G-X) there were noted patches of cobbles, several small hollows, and gullies in the clay subsoil, and some unidentified slag-like material.

The parallel rows of post-holes must have belonged to wooden buildings, although their precise dimensions could not be determined within the limits of the excavated areas. These excavations appear, however, to have reached the northern limit of the post-hole space. In the most northerly and most north-easterly areas there was much burned clay and charred wood, associated with a considerable quantity of Antonine pottery. These may have come from an oven.

Finds from the post-hole areas in general, including the east end of Trench 9 (see below) were as follows: charred wood, iron nails, a bolt, a hob-nail and fragments, iron slag, glass scraps including a few pieces of window-glass, pieces of brick and tile, including wall- or flue-tiles, small fragments of Samian cups (Drag. 33), platters (Drag. 18/31, 31 and Lud Sb), and decorated bowls (Drag. 30? and 37) besides a scrap decorated *en barbotine*; amphora fragments; rim and side fragments of mortaria of hard white, and soft buff clay, of red clay with white or cream slip, of red, and brown clay; rim and side fragments of large, medium and small white, buff, red and grey jars; rim and side fragments of coarse and fine fumed cooking-pots, bowls and platters. All the pottery was of Antonine date.

The post-holes had, in some cases, packing stones still in position round them. One post-hole had among its packing stones a squared building stone, apparently re-used from an earlier building.

In the six areas (A-F) south of the rows of post-holes, evidence for two phases of occupation was also forthcoming. The four most northerly areas out of the six revealed cobbling at a depth of 1 ft. to 1 ft. 3 in. below the surface. The cobbling was particularly well-preserved in the two most northerly areas, with even some of its gravel surfacing preserved in places. At one point the cobbling was interrupted by an ash-filled hollow about 3 ft. by 1 ft. 9 in. across.

The cobbling became more patchy as it extended south (for at least 18 ft.), and it appeared to end on the north edge of a hollow running from north-west to south-east. This hollow was about $4\frac{1}{2}$ ft. wide and 3 ft. deep, and was roughly V-shaped except at one point where its north side seemed to slope down very steeply. Here possibly some later hole had been dug down into the hollow.

The hollow as found in the southern part of the areas was exactly in line with the hollow of the same width and depth which was found in Trench 5 in 1953, and must have been a continuation of it. It was therefore at least 35 ft. long. The hollow was filled with ash, along with some burned clay and charred wood, and a little dark turfy material. From it there came also a few scraps of bone, too tiny to be identified, a corroded piece of iron, a fragment of a decorated Samian bowl (Drag. 37), fragments of amphorae and mortaria of pinkish-white and red clay, of a grey jar, of coarse fumed and fine fumed cooking pots, and of a grey platter. All were of Antonine date.

On the edge of the hollow and over it there were large stones, which seemed to mark the southern limit of the cobbling. Part of the cobbling was taken up, and under it were found patches of ash, scraps of wood and bone, two corroded pieces of iron (one of them a nail), a piece of wall-tile, diamond-scored, the base of a Samian platter (Drag. 18/31 or 31), a mortarium rim of reddish-brown clay, the

rim of a coarse fumed cooking pot, a base fragment of a fine fumed bowl, and other coarse-ware sherds, all of Antonine date. These were presumably contemporary with the material found in the hollow.

Among the stones of the cobbling were scraps of wood and bone, part of a Samian cup (Drag. 33), stamped MALL [IA CI], another Samian fragment, probably from a cup (Drag. 33), an amphora fragment, a red mortarium rim, a base fragment of a large grey jar, rim and side fragments of coarse fumed cooking pots, a fragment of a coarse fumed beaker or small jar, and a base fragment of a coarse fumed bowl. The material in the cobbling may either have been incorporated in the cobbling when it was laid down (and therefore probably be contemporary with the finds from the hollow and under the cobbling), or have been tramped into the cobbling after it was laid down (and therefore be later than the finds from the hollow and under the cobbling).

In loose soil just above the cobbling, and in loose soil generally in the six southern areas there were found a gun-flint, scraps of charred wood and bone, pieces of corroded iron including a few nails varying in length from 1 in. to about 5½ in., a scrap of glass, another of glass slag, pieces of clay (daub), fragments of tiles including wall-tiles, Samian sherds from cups (Drag. 33), platters (Drag. 18/31), and a decorated bowl (Drag. 37), amphora fragments, rim and side fragments of mortaria of pinkish-white clay, of red clay with cream slip, of red and brown clay, fragments of large red and grey jars, rim and side fragments of grey jars, and of coarse and fine fumed cooking pots, of a fine fumed beaker or small jar, of a white bowl, and of coarse and fine fumed bowls and platters (besides some medieval green-glazed potsherds). There was a notable preponderance of coarse ware over Samian ware.

A trench (Trench 8), 50 ft. long with two short unexcavated portions, was dug southwards from the line of the hollow, and to the west of the six southerly areas. At about 15 ft. 3 in. to 18 ft. 9 in. from the north end of Trench 8 there was a band of stones which may possibly be in line with the clay and cobble foundation near the south end of Trench 5. At about 10 ft. further south there was a steep vertical drop in the subsoil. Test-holes dug south of this went down 5 ft. into artificial filling, and probing 6 ft. further down brought up a piece of modern china. There was, obviously, a deep modern disturbance here which was probably connected with the construction of air-raid shelters along the southern edge of the Park during the 1939-45 War.

The southern defences of the Antonine fort or fort-annexe in the Park are therefore still undiscovered. They must, however, have lain over 350 ft. (and probably much more) from the Antonine Wall.

A trench (Trench 9), 108 ft. long, cut westwards from the area excavations to the hedge bounding the west side of the Park was still within the Roman occupied area, for it did not reveal any remains of a Roman rampart or ditches, nor yet any modern disturbance serious enough to have destroyed them. The fort or fort-annexe must therefore have extended at least as far west as the western Park hedge. It must then have measured at least 280 ft. across from east to west.

The hollows and the rows of post-holes are parallel to one another, and approxi-

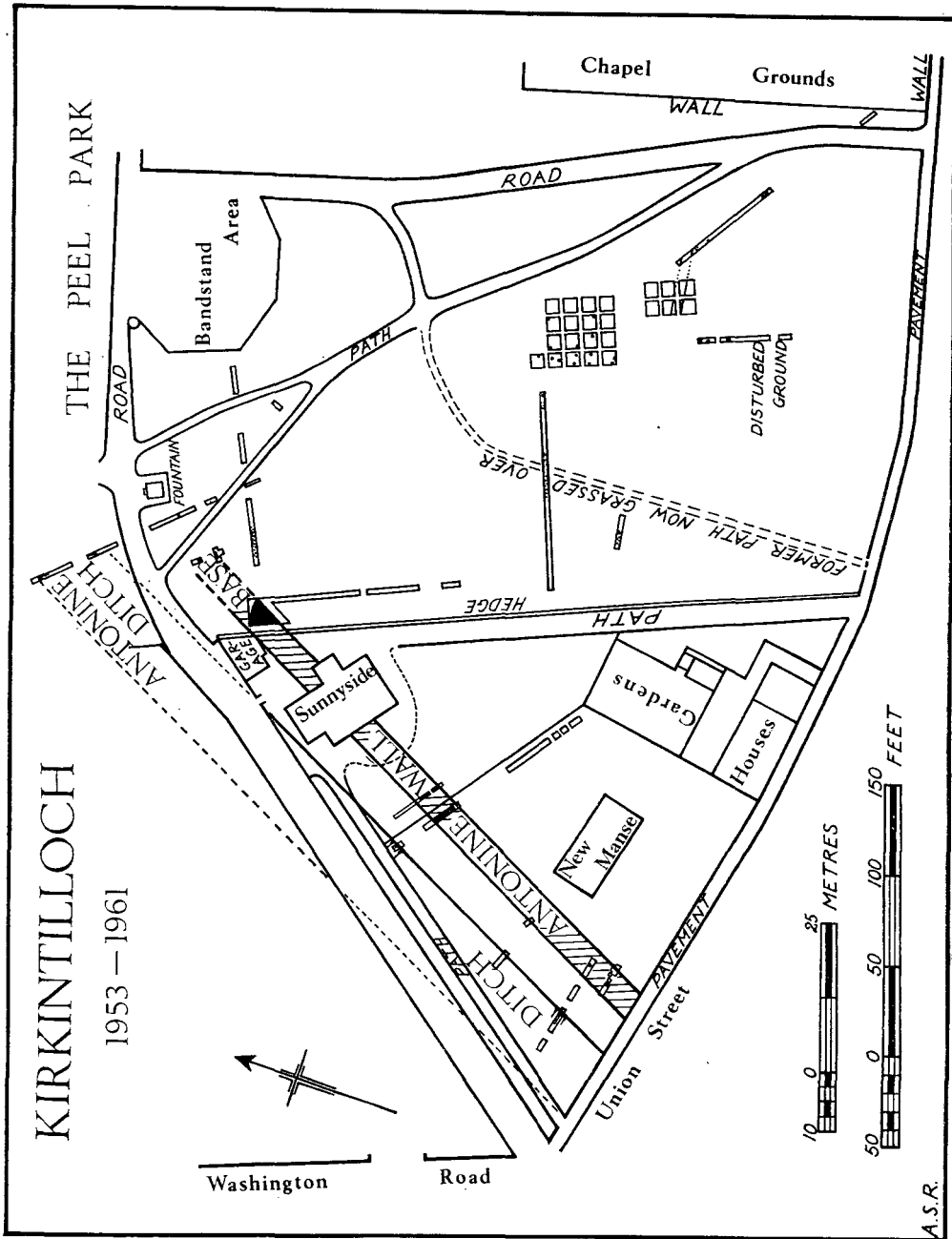


FIG. 3

mately at right angles to the lane in Trench 7 and to the street in Trench 4. The street is not, however, exactly parallel to the Antonine Wall base in the north-west corner of the Park.

In 1953 and 1958 Dr Charles Scobie was allowed to cut trenches on the presumed line of the Antonine Wall to the west of the Peel, in the garden of 'Sunnyside', by permission of Miss Fletcher, and in the grounds of the new manse of St Mary's Church, Kirkintilloch. Although the ground had been much disturbed in both medieval and modern times, parts of the stone base of the Wall were found in position. Kerb-stones were almost entirely lacking, but enough survived to show that the Wall base could not have been less than 15 ft. in width (fig. 3).

To the north of the Wall base and at a distance of about 22 ft. from it, the Antonine Ditch was found. Its south lip was discovered at two points, but it was not possible to determine its exact width, since its presumed north edge lies under a road. In one trench, however, there was a 25-ft. width of the Ditch and at the north end of this trench grey silt was found to a depth of at least 5 ft. 6 in. before water flooded in. If the slopes of scarp and counterscarp were similar, this section shows that the Ditch must have had a minimum width of 35 ft.

The line of the south edge of the Ditch as found to the west of the Park is not exactly in line with the south lip exposed in Trench 2 in the Park in 1953. Allowance must, however, be made for considerable erosion on the brow of the hill in the Park.

The Wall base on the other hand proved to be exactly in line with the section uncovered in the north-west corner of the Park. The Wall therefore continues from the Park in a south-westerly direction and in a straight line for at least 250 ft.

Digging to the south of the Wall, in the New Manse grounds (fig. 3), failed to reveal any positive trace either of buildings or of defences. The only evidence for Roman occupation so far recovered is within the Peel Park itself. If the remains there belong to a fort-annexe rather than to a fort, then the fort must lie within the space of about 300 ft. left unexplored between the Park and the ground trenched to the west of the Cowgate and south of the Auld Kirk. Much patient searching in the extremely limited areas available in and around the edges of the Park still lies ahead if the dimensions and character of the Antonine Wall fort at Kirkintilloch are not to elude us altogether.

2. THE ANTONINE WALL

TRENCHING NORTH OF BEECHES ROAD, DUNTOCHER, DUNBARTONSHIRE,
1955 AND 1957

It was on the authority of Sir George Macdonald that the presumed line of the Antonine Wall and Ditch was marked on the O.S. maps (e.g. Dunbartonshire, 6 in. sheet, xxiii NW.) through a field north of Beeches Road, which is now a housing site. His evidence was that in a trench cut in the field immediately to the west, the Antonine Ditch was found 130 ft. from the south-east corner of the field, and that at the extreme eastern edge of the field which is now a housing site, the Ditch was found 250 ft. from the south-east corner of the field. His account does not state

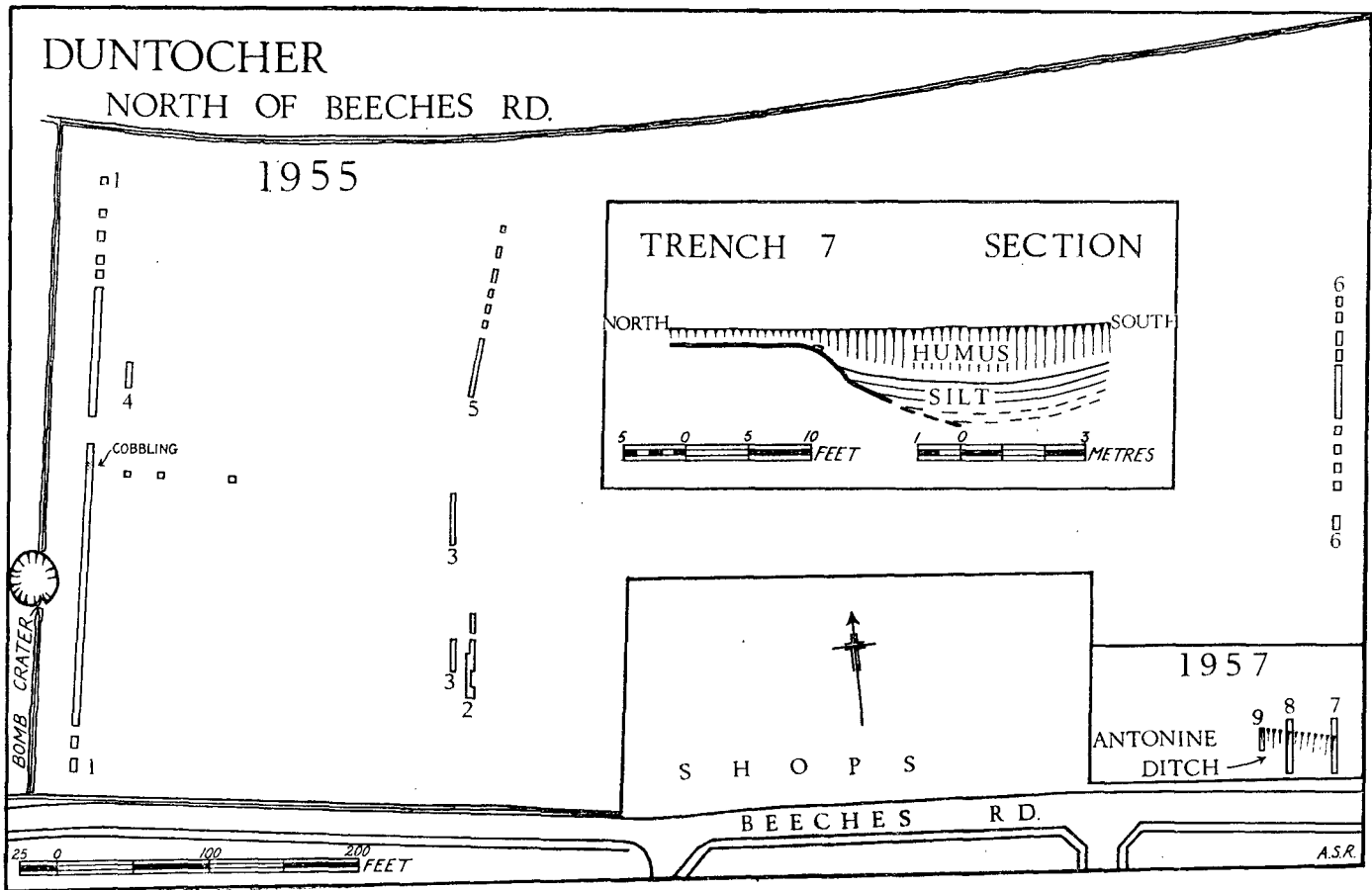


FIG. 4

whether the north or south edge of the Ditch or merely the centre of it was encountered, and it is noteworthy that no traces of the stone foundation of the Antonine Wall were recorded in either of these two areas.¹

Excavation began in May 1955 (under the auspices of the Ministry of Public Building and Works) with the cutting of a trench (Trench 1) close to the western edge of the 'housing' field (fig. 4). Trench 1 ran northwards from a point about 10 ft. north of Beeches Road and reached a total length of 400 ft., interrupted by 8 short unexcavated sections.

The subsoil, yellow clay, appeared to be quite undisturbed for the whole length of Trench 1, but a number of scattered stones and stone rumbling drains were found in the southern 270 ft. of the Trench, and, at 202-10 ft. from the south end, there was what appeared to be a very lightly cobbled roadway. This was, however, very close to the surface and three small observation pits dug to the east failed to reveal any continuation of it. Its proximity to the surface suggests in any case that it was quite recent.

Trench 1 extended almost to the northernmost limit of the field, and its northern sector ran over what appeared to be a natural hollow. No traces of the Wall foundation, or of the Ditch were found anywhere in Trench 1, not even in the hollow. The hollow simply contained a modern tile drain, with some very large tumbled stones over and to the north of it, apparently a modern filling.

Trench 2 was opened up about 300 ft. east of the western edge of the field on the presumed line of the Antonine Wall and Ditch. Unfortunately, this trench proved to be running along the course of a modern tile drain all the way, and had to be abandoned.

Trench 3 was dug west of Trench 2, also on the presumed line of the Wall and Ditch. It was in two sections, the more southerly being 20 ft. long, and the more northerly, separated from the former by an interval of 60 ft., being 35 ft. long. It disclosed no traces of either Wall foundation or Ditch.

Trench 4 was dug east of Trench 1, with a length of 17 ft., on the line of what appeared at one time possibly to be part of a stone foundation. It was found to contain only some large scattered stones.

Trench 5 was cut across the line of the hollow in the northern part of the field, about 300 ft. east of the western edge of the field, in order to verify the evidence obtained in Trench 1 that there had never been a Ditch there. The Trench was 116 ft. long, with six short unexcavated sections. No Ditch was present, but some large scattered stones and rumbling drains were found.

Trench 6 was cut alongside the eastern fence of the field close to the presumed location where Sir George Macdonald himself had opened up the ground. Trench 6 was 154 ft. long with nine short unexcavated portions. It covered the area where Sir George Macdonald believed the Ditch had been found (about 250 ft. north of the south-east corner of the field), with a generous margin to north and south.

The subsoil in Trench 6, blue and yellow clay, was found at an average depth of about 2 ft. from the surface, so that, had the stone foundation of the Wall ever

¹ *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-15), 100 f.

been present – it would have been laid on the subsoil or possibly set into the subsoil – it could never have been removed by ploughing.

There was no sign of the usual gradual slope of a Roman ditch, or of ditch silting. There were, however, several disturbances of the ground in Trench 6, but they all appeared to be due to the laying of rumbling and tile drains. It seemed possible that Sir George Macdonald had found some such disturbance and believed it to be caused by the presence of a ditch.

At the end of three weeks' persistent trenching in May 1955 there had to be recorded a complete failure to confirm the line of the Antonine Wall and Ditch as marked on the O.S. maps on the authority of Sir George Macdonald. Trenching of the field had in fact been so extensive as almost to preclude the possibility that the Wall and Ditch had ever been present at all in the area concerned. Nevertheless the contractors engaged in house-building on the site were requested to report any signs of solid stone foundations. None were reported.

Meanwhile, it was suggested that the line of the Ditch might well be represented by the hollow west of the housing site and south of Beeches Road in which stands a row of beech trees. This possibility was rejected by Sir George Macdonald only on the grounds of his excavation in the fields north of Beeches Road where he believed the Ditch was found.

If the beech-tree hollow did mark the line of the Ditch, and if Sir George Macdonald was correct in the line he gave for the Wall and Ditch east of the housing site, it seemed possible that the line might pass through a small plot of ground lying immediately north of Beeches Road, and south-east of the housing area. Accordingly, three trenches (Trenches 7–9) were cut in April 1957, to test this possibility.

Trench 7 was laid out parallel to the eastern fence of the plot of ground and at a distance of 16 ft. from it. The north edge of a ditch was found at 11–12 ft. from the north end of Trench 7. The subsoil, at a depth of 1 ft. 3 in. from the modern surface, was yellow clay, and it sloped down southwards with the incline usual for a Roman ditch, instead of dropping vertically down as would have been the case with a trench cut for a modern drain or the like (see section). The ditch-edge had a stone set on it, a feature noted more than once on the outer edge of the Antonine Ditch during excavations carried out on Golden Hill, Duntocher, in 1948–51.¹

The slope of the ditch was followed downwards to a depth of about 5 ft. 9 in., when water filled the Trench and made further digging impossible. At a depth of about 4 ft. there was uncovered a layer of heavy grey silt in the ditch, similar to that found in sections cut across the Antonine Ditch on Golden Hill.² The silt proved to go down to a depth of at least 6 ft. 6 in. before water flooded the Trench. The silt was present as far south as the south end of Trench 7; no sign of the south edge of the ditch was found in the length of the Trench. The ditch must therefore have had a width of well over 20 ft.

Trench 8 was cut 26 ft. west of Trench 7. The yellow clay subsoil was found at a depth of 1 ft. to 1 ft. 3 in. at the north end of Trench 8 and followed southwards. At 5–8 ft. from the north end of the Trench there was a modern stone rumbling

¹ Robertson, Anne, *An Antonine Fort: Golden Hill, Duntocher* (1957), 11.

² *ibid.*

drain which had destroyed the edge of the ditch. The drain was removed and the yellow clay was found under it sloping down southwards, as in Trench 7. Further south, at about 12 ft. from the north end of the Trench, heavy grey silt was discovered, the top of it being at a level of 3 ft. to 4 ft. 6 in. from the modern surface. It went down to a depth of at least 6 ft.; the influx of water prevented any deeper digging at this point.

At the south end of Trench 8 a very hard sandy brown filling was revealed at a depth of 3 ft. It went down to a depth of at least 5 ft. 10 in. This sandy brown filling was neither subsoil nor clayey silt, but appeared to be later filling which had been compacted by the weight of the superincumbent soil. Its presence, to such a depth, at the south end of Trench 8 showed that the south edge of the ditch lay still further south. Since its north edge seemed to be at about 8 ft. from the north end of Trench 8, its width must have been over 25 ft., and probably well over it.

Trench 9 was cut 12 ft. west of Trench 8. The yellow clay subsoil was found at the north end of Trench 9 at a depth of about 1 ft. 3 in., and was followed south. At about 2 ft. from the north end of the Trench the yellow clay began to slope gently southwards until at 5 ft. from the north end of the Trench it was at a depth of 3 ft. from the modern surface. The stone rumbling drain was again present, but lay further south than it did in Trench 8, so that it had not destroyed the north edge of the ditch. The heavy grey silt was again encountered, at 5 ft. from the north end of the Trench, and at a depth of about 3 ft. It sloped slightly downwards to a depth of 4 ft. 6 in. at the south end of Trench 9.

In each of the three Trenches 7-9, the north edge and part of the slope of an undoubted Roman ditch were found clearly outlined in the yellow clay subsoil. Heavy grey silt, typical of the clay-cut Antonine Ditch on Golden Hill, Duntocher, was also present in the ditch in all three Trenches. Moreover, the three points on the north edge of the ditch were in line with one another.

It must be concluded that the north edge of the Antonine Ditch was found in this area, its south edge being too far south to have been discovered in any of the three Trenches. The Ditch must have had a width of over 25 ft., and probably much more. Its south edge doubtless lies under Beeches Road, and the Antonine Wall base under the houses on the south side of the Road.

The line of the Ditch, as evidenced by Trenches 7-9, is unexpected, inclining as it does from south-east to north-west. Since the Ditch was certainly not present in Trench 1, cut in 1955 at the west end of the 'housing' field, it must have turned slightly south-westwards at some point between Trenches 9 and 1 in order to come into line with the beech-tree hollow if, as seems more and more probable, this hollow marks the course of the Ditch. Its line, in fact, must have been substantially that given for it on the older O.S. maps (see, for example, the map in *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-15), opposite p. 114). In that case, a stretch of the Antonine Ditch probably did lie just within the 'housing' field, south of Trenches 2 and 3, but it could only have been a short stretch, and the remains of the Antonine Wall base must lie to the south of the housing area.

To the east, on the other hand, uncertainty about the line of the Antonine Wall

and Ditch increases. As a result of Sir George Macdonald's trenching in the field to the east (now occupied by houses), in which he recognised not only the Ditch, but also the kerbing of the Wall, in two different places (*P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-15), 101), he believed the Wall and Ditch to have formed an awkward salient. If this view is correct, the Ditch as found in April 1957 would have had to make a sharp turn north-eastwards to join the line of the salient. Such an abrupt turn seems rather unlikely. The matter must, however, be left meantime with the hope that some evidence may turn up to the east of the plot of ground excavated in 1957 which may establish with more certainty the line of the Antonine Wall and Ditch as it runs eastwards towards Golden Hill.

3. THE ANTONINE WALL AT TENTFIELD, STIRLINGSHIRE, 1959

In September 1959 a high-pressure gas pipe-line planned by the Scottish Gas Board crossed the Antonine frontier from north to south at a point about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile E. of the annexe to the fort at Rough Castle, in Tentfield Plantation. By arrangement with the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments of the Ministry of Public Building and Works, the gas-pipe trench at the point of crossing the Roman frontier was dug as an archaeological section through the Antonine Wall, Ditch and upcast mound, with labour generously provided by the Scottish Gas Board. A length of 172 ft. of the section was meticulously cleaned up, photographed and drawn, with the assistance of Ministry draughtsmen (fig. 5). The section was 7 ft. wide at the top, but was reduced in width by scarcements 1 ft. - 1 ft. 6 in. wide on both sides of the trench. The broken line on the drawn section marks the scarcement. For the purpose of laying the gas pipe the section was cut 2-4 ft. down into the subsoil, consequently removing the stone base of the Antonine Wall.

The stone base proved to be 15 ft. wide, with large kerb-stones along the north and south edges. The stones of the base were bedded in a grey and yellow sandy layer, probably Roman humus. No Roman turf line was distinguished, probably because the turf was stripped off in Roman times. Below the grey and yellow sandy layer there was yellow sand which appeared to be a top layer of subsoil. At about 36 ft. north of the south end of the trench it became harder and more gravelly. Below the yellow sandy subsoil was grey-brown clay subsoil.

The superstructure of the Wall was standing to a height of almost 5 ft. above the stone base. It was here formed entirely of turves (except for a few small stones). The black turf layering was very distinctly preserved (see detail of Antonine Wall, fig. 5). Over the kerbs the turves had been laid in regular horizontal courses, but between the kerbs they presented a much less regular pattern, except where they stood directly over the stones of the base.

At the front and rear of the Wall, the turves appeared to have sagged outwards beyond the kerbs, and beyond that again there was slip or washdown from the upper part of the turf superstructure. It was difficult to distinguish precisely between laid turf and slipped turf, particularly at the front of the Wall where much weathering had taken place.

Between Wall and Ditch there was a berm of over 20 ft. into which had been cut

two recent hollows, now filled with dark soil and, in one case, small stones. The Ditch, V-shaped, had been about 42 ft. wide and close on 12 ft. deep. In the centre of the Ditch there was a depth of almost 5 ft. of natural silt – heavy black peaty material which became progressively wetter from top to bottom.

The upcast mound was observed with particular interest. An opportunity for examining the upcast mound of the Antonine Ditch is a rare occurrence.

At Tentfield the upcast mound consisted, as was to be expected, of clay, with some small stones, dug out of the Antonine Ditch. Some of this material had slipped back a very short way over the counterscarp of the Ditch. What was not expected was the discovery of what appeared to be a limiting bank for the upcast mound. This bank was at about 56–70 ft. north of the Ditch counterscarp, and had a maximum height of 2 ft. in the middle. It was formed of yellow sandy material with a little clay in it, such as would be derived from the top layer of subsoil skimmed off the Ditch. Under the limiting bank (?) there was some iron pan on top of the yellow sandy subsoil. In any case, whether or not there had been a limiting bank, the upcast from the Ditch had been so disposed and spread out as to form a broad low mound not more than 4 ft. high.

A modern water-main had been driven through the upcast mound from east to west at a point about 38 ft. north of the Ditch, and two post-Roman earth dykes had been constructed at about 6–12 ft., and about 49–55 ft. north of the Ditch respectively. The two dykes had been formed of clay delved out from the upcast mound, on either side, and heaped up. Below the heaped up material there was light brown earth. This was probably loose top-soil or humus which had accumulated over the upcast mound.

4. THE ANTONINE WALL AT WILDERNESS AND CADDER GOLF COURSE, 1963

In April-May 1963 the Ministry of Public Building and Works arranged for a series of trenches to be cut across the presumed line of the Antonine Wall and Ditch at Wilderness, in a field north of Balmuildy Road, before the remains were destroyed by sand-quarrying, and also on Cadder Golf Course, where the line is subject to a less imminent threat of destruction through housing development at some future date. The quarry-area lies immediately west of Cadder Golf Course, and east of a farm road running northwards from Balmuildy Road, at the bench mark 234.3. To the west of the farm road is the site of the Roman fortlet discovered some years ago from the air by Dr St Joseph.¹

The trenches in the quarry-field (Trenches 1–4) covered a length of about 400 ft. of the Roman line, between points about 700 and 1100 ft. west of the SE. corner of the field (fig. 6). The quarrying operations had already destroyed the eastern 700 ft. of the line, and by now have extended almost to the western boundary of the field. The V-shaped outline of the Antonine Ditch was clearly visible in the east and west faces of the quarry. It was 22–25 ft. wide and at least 7 ft. deep.

¹ *J.R.S.*, xli (1951), 61.

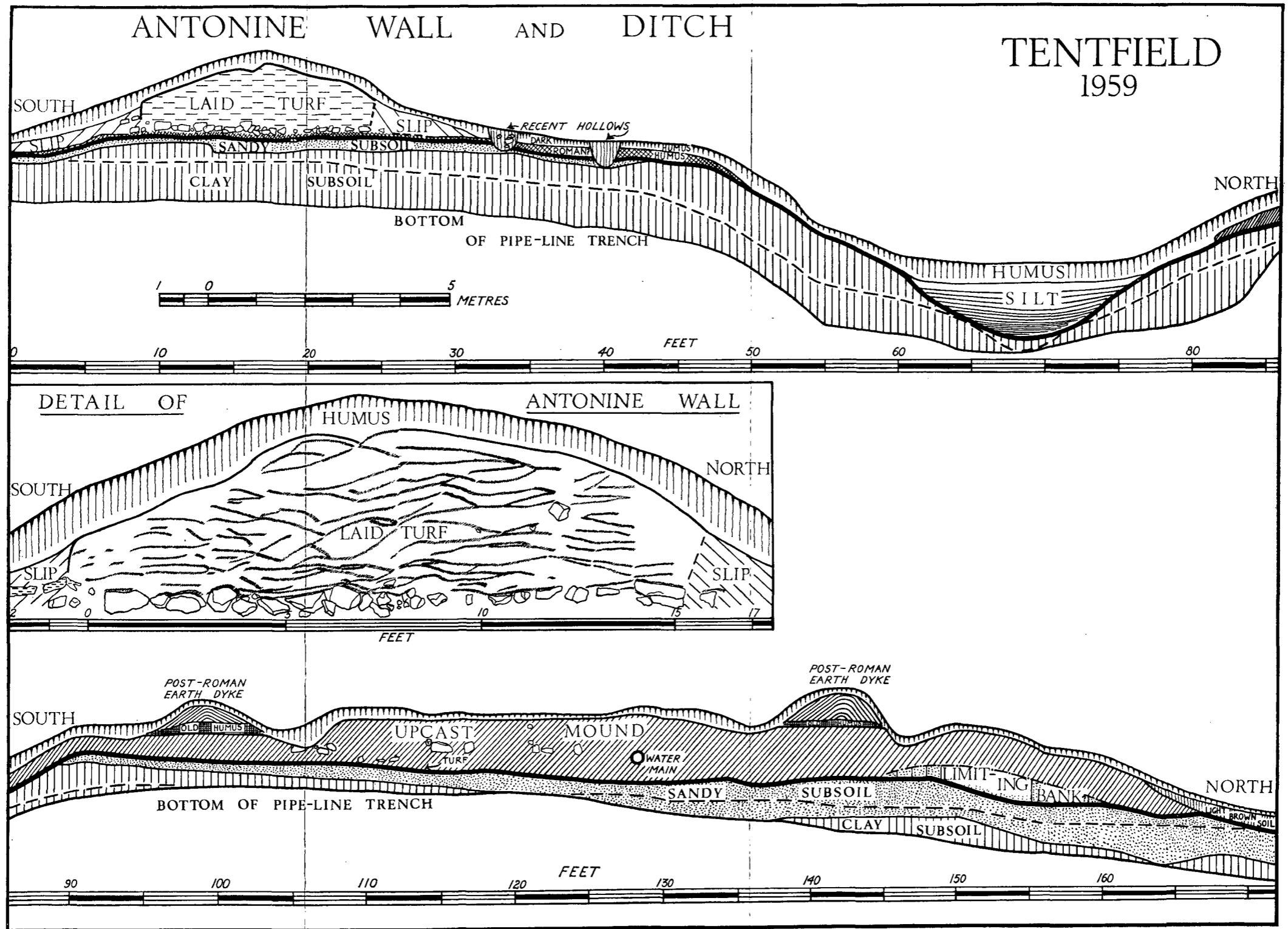


Fig. 5

The most easterly trench cut in 1963 (Trench 1) revealed the north and south edges of the Ditch about 25 ft. apart, and sloping gently downwards. Its full depth was not determined. At a distance of about 30 ft. to the south of the Ditch there were encountered the most northerly surviving stones of the Antonine Wall base. Its northern kerb-stones were missing, but there was a width of at least 12 ft. of the base preserved, including the south kerb. An area 30 ft. long and 15 ft. wide was

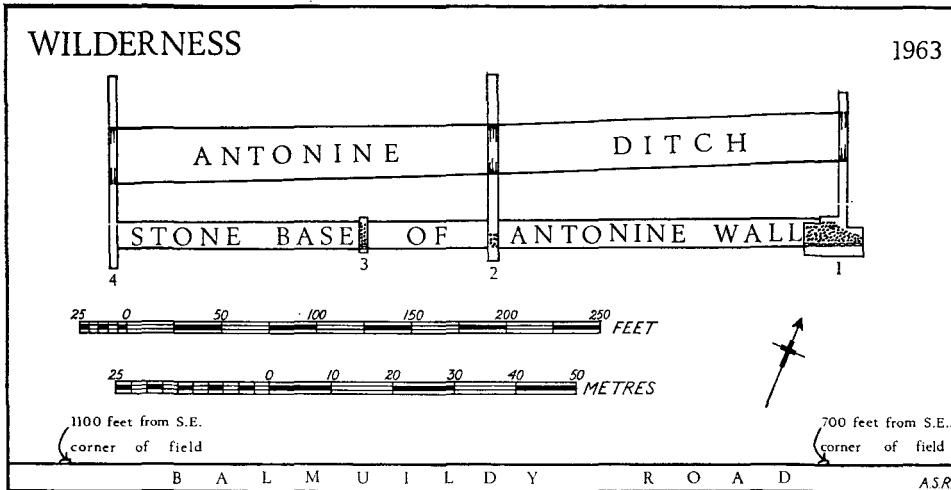


FIG. 6

opened up to reveal more of the stone base, but for the whole length of 30 ft. the north kerb proved to have been uprooted, although the south kerb survived in fine preservation. There was none of the turf superstructure *in situ*.

Trench 2 was cut about 180 ft. west of Trench 1, with a length of 93 ft. The Ditch was again found to be 25 ft. wide, but only a few scattered stones of the base were present. In Trench 3, 62 ft. west of Trench 2, and 17 ft. long, there was found surviving a total width of 14 ft. of the stone base including the south kerb, but not the north kerb. If an extra foot is allowed for this kerb, the base must have been at least 15 ft. wide. Trench 4 was over 126 ft. west of Trench 3 and 100 ft. long. The Ditch was again found to be 25 ft. wide. There were no surviving remains of the turf wall or its stone base.

The line determined for the Antonine Wall and Ditch by the four trenches confirms that shown on the O.S. maps (e.g. on Dunbartonshire, 6 in. sheet, xxxii, SE., Lanarkshire, 1, SE.). The Ditch maintained a constant width of 25 ft. and the stone base must have been at least 15 ft. wide.

On Cadder Golf Course, to the east of the quarry, four short trenches were cut across the presumed line of the stone base, the Ditch being clearly visible on the ground. In the distance covered by the four trenches, over 600 yds., the stone base had a constant width of 15 ft. In three out of the four trenches, both the north and south kerbs were well-preserved, and in two of these three trenches, there was a

covered drain or culvert running across the base. The line was exactly as shown on the O.S. maps (e.g. as above and on Lanarkshire, I, NE., Stirlingshire, xxxii, NE.).

5. DALGINROSS, COMRIE, PERTHSHIRE, 1961

On the southern edge of the Dalginross district of Comrie, at a distance of about 10 miles north of the Roman site at Ardoch, Braco, there is a Roman camp, about 25 acres in area, with, to the north-east of it, two Roman enclosures, one inside the other. These two enclosures lie over 200 ft. above sea-level, on the edge of a cliff bounding the eastern side of the Ruchill Valley.¹

The north-western part of the site has been eroded by the Ruchill water, but enough survives to show that the inner enclosure was close on 400 ft. square. Of the

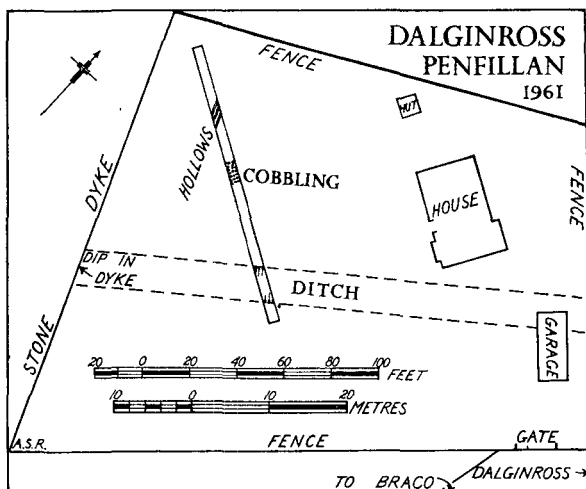


FIG. 7

outer enclosure there exists only one complete side (the south-east side), over 500 ft. long, and parts of two other sides which were probably about 600 ft. long. This enclosure appears to have been defended by a rampart with a single accompanying ditch. The inner enclosure had double ditches.² Entrances are still faintly discernible in the south and east sides of both enclosures.

The only Roman finds recorded from Dalginross are three coins. One, an aureus of Titus, was found before 1786. A second, an As of Domitian of A.D. 86, 'was found about 1905 by a farmer singling turnips within the area of the fort. It had been in good or very good condition when lost.' The third coin was a denarius of Severus Alexander said (in 1924) 'to have been picked up a generation or so ago at Dalginross between Camp Cottage and the Manse'.³

¹ Sir George Macdonald, in *P.S.A.S.*, LXXIII (1938-9), 252 ff., with references to plans by Alexander Gordon and William Roy, and with a re-drawing of an old plan dated 1786; Crawford, O. G. S., *Topography of Roman Scotland north of the Antonine Wall* (1949), 41 ff., with a plan 'from air photographs after Richmond'.

² J. K. St Joseph, in *J.R.S.*, xli (1951), 64; LV (1965), 81.

³ Sir George Macdonald, in *P.S.A.S.*, LVIII (1923-4), 326.

As Sir George Macdonald himself remarked, the denarius of Severus Alexander 'can have nothing to do with the Roman occupation'. The aureus of Titus could have been lost either in the late first century, or in the second century A.D. Gold coins had a very long circulation life. The As of Domitian, however, 'in good or very good condition' may not have been very long in circulation before being lost. Roman bronze coins were in constant use, and quickly became worn and rubbed. It is possible, therefore, that the As of Domitian was lost during the late first century A.D. It certainly hints at a Flavian occupation of Dalginross.

The two Dalginross enclosures have in fact been regarded as 'the remains of two forts probably of different ages'.¹ No excavation however took place there until 1961.

In 1960 part of the south-east side of the outer enclosure had a small-holding, Penfillan, carved out of it, and in April 1961 the owner allowed a trench to be

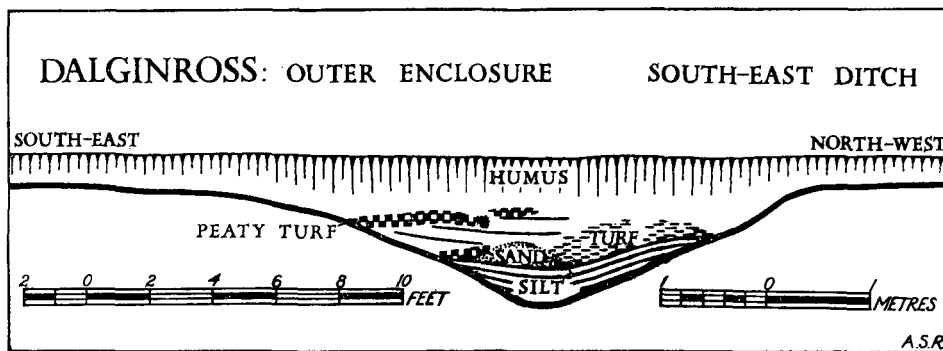


FIG. 8

opened up in his ground before he completed the planting of an orchard. The trench was cut with labour financed by the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow University, and with the co-operation of the Perthshire Society of Natural Science (Archaeological Section). It was not possible to lay out the trench exactly at right angles to the defences of the outer enclosure since it had to be so directed as to avoid fruit-trees already planted and rows of beehives (fig. 7).

The trench was 118 ft. long and 4 ft. wide, and at just over 8 ft. from the south-east end of it, a V-shaped ditch was encountered, about 16 ft. wide and 4 ft. deep (fig. 8). The ditch had been cut out of dark-brown gravel above which, on the ditch-edges, there was a very thin spread of yellow, or brownish-yellow gravel. In the bottom of the ditch there was over a foot of silt in the form of gravel slipped down from the sides along with a little washed-in earth. Above the silt there was a patch of brownish sand, and above that some turfy material and very dark peaty turf. These probably represent slip from a rampart running parallel to the ditch on its north-west side.

North-west of the ditch the trench was cleared down to the brown gravel subsoil for its whole length. At about 36-46 ft. to the north of the ditch there was a patch

¹ Crawford, O. G. S., *op. cit.*, 41.

of large pebbles or cobbles apparently set in the subsoil. The cobbling was too far away from the ditch to represent a rampart base, but was, rather, at a distance where an intervallum street might be expected.

To the north-west of the patch of cobbling the subsoil was uninterrupted for the remaining stretch of 48 ft. to the end of the trench, except for three parallel shallow hollows which penetrated only an inch or so into the subsoil. These three hollows were seen to run roughly parallel to the stone dyke bordering Penfillan on the south, and may perhaps represent modern furrows (fig. 7). The only small finds were some scraps of modern china and glass, recovered from loose top-soil.

Since the ditch of the outer enclosure was sectioned in only one trench, its exact direction is uncertain, but if a dip in the stone dyke to the south is assumed to represent the continuation of the ditch, its alignment would be as shown on the large-scale plan (fig. 7). This does not correspond exactly with the line suggested by ground observation but the surface traces of ditches and ramparts are admittedly very faint indeed.

The failure to recover any remains of buildings, or indeed any signs of occupation (at least within the part of the outer enclosure spanned by the single trench), may be due either to their having been removed by ploughing, or to their never having existed. The latter alternative cannot be dismissed altogether in view of the evidence from recent excavations on the comparable site at Raeburnfoot, where there were also two enclosures, one within the other, the outer yielding no evidence of permanent occupation.

At Raeburnfoot the two enclosures were apparently of the same period, the outer enclosure having been either a small temporary camp anticipating the construction of the small enclosure, or an outer compound to the small enclosure, or possibly having served both purposes¹ (fig. 9).

At Dalginross the presence or absence of structures would have to be determined with certainty by further excavation, not only in the outer enclosure, but also in the inner enclosure, to discover whether or not buildings survived there. Meanwhile it may be said that if the two enclosures at Dalginross belonged to two different periods, the outer being the earlier, then the apparent absence of a stone base for the outer rampart would suggest for it a late first-century date, rather than a date in the Antonine period when the under-pinning of a turf rampart with a stone base had become almost standard practice.² The bronze As of Domitian 'in good or very good condition' may indeed have been a relic of a Flavian occupation.

6. ROMAN POTTERY FROM LURG MOOR, RENFREWSHIRE, 1959

In 1952, Mr R. W. Feachem, then of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, observed on a National Survey air photograph a Roman fortlet on Lurg Moor, above Greenock, Renfrewshire. A subsequent ground survey showed that the fortlet measured about 160 ft. by 140 ft. overall, with its east and west ramparts very well preserved. Mr Feachem also traced a

¹ *T. Dumf. and Gall. A.S.*, xxxix (1962), 24 ff.

² Robertson, Anne, *The Antonine Wall* (1963), 10.

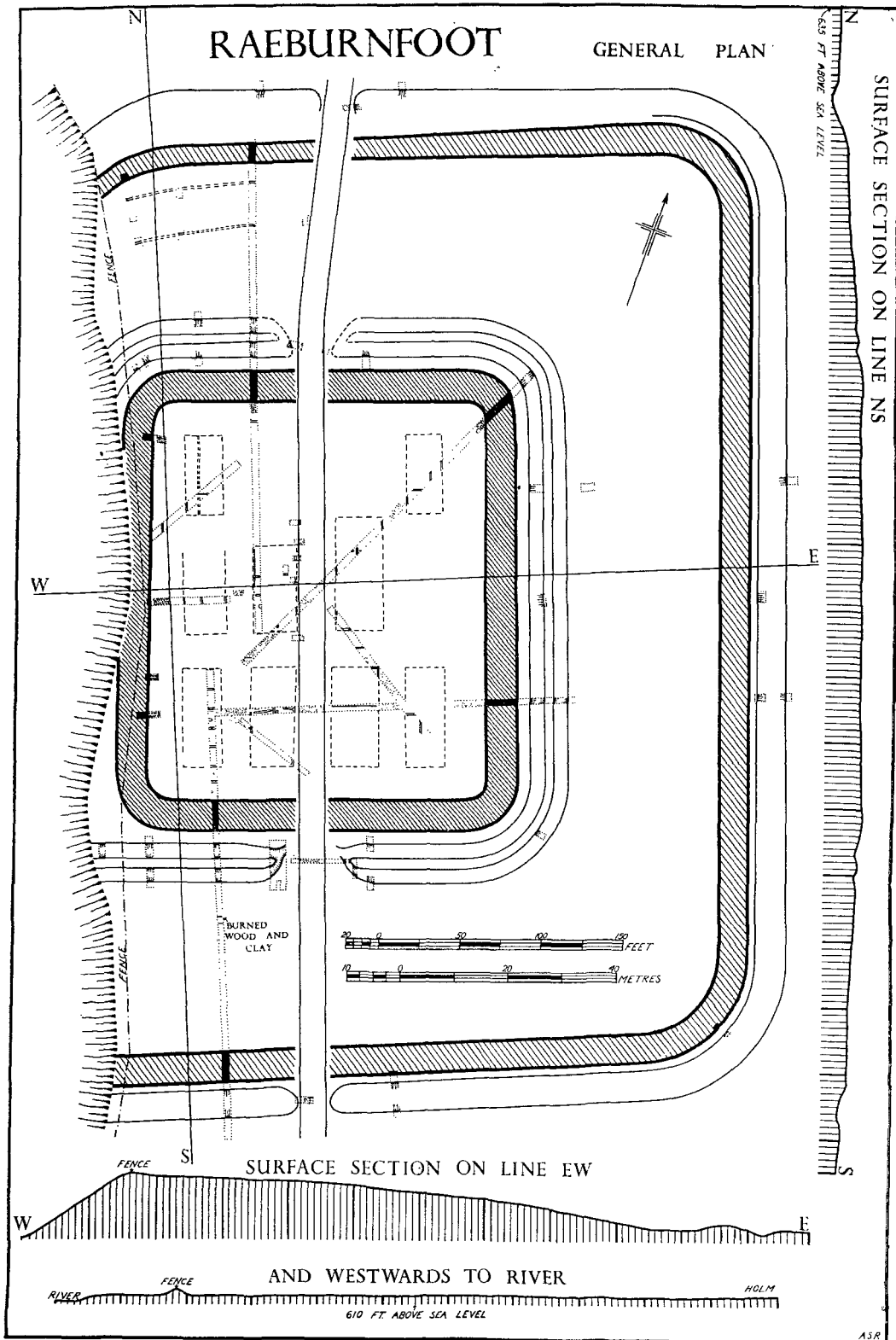


Fig. 9

causeway, about 15 ft. wide, for over 100 yds. southwards from the south entrance of the fortlet. This was apparently its only entrance.¹

In 1959 Mr Frank Newall made a further examination of the site, which led him to suggest that the ground to the S. and W. of the fortlet may have been occupied by an annexe.² Immediately to the SW. of the fortlet he found 15 fragments of Roman coarse pottery, and a tiny piece of a dark-green glass vessel, possibly Roman.

The glass and the potsherds are now in the Hunterian Museum. The potsherds are as follows.

6 fragments of a very hard grey jar, with outcurving rim, diam. 5 in., and burnished side with acute-angled lattice (fig. 10, 1), cf. Gillam, J. P., *Types of Roman Coarse Pottery Vessels in Northern Britain* (1957), 115-17.

The fabric is similar to that of many Antonine Wall jars, e.g. from Balmuildy (Miller, S. N., *The Roman Fort at Balmuildy* (1922), 86).

5 fragments of the lower part of a fairly hard grey-brown jar with darker slip outside and whitish slip inside, and large coarse lattice.

Fragment of side of fairly hard grey jar(?) with brownish flecks.

Scrap of side of red-brown jar(?) with light slip or surface.

Scrap of side of red-brown jar(?) with dark slip or surface, and faint lattice.

Fragment of side of cooking-pot of coarse fumed ware (Gillam's category 1 burnished ware) with large coarse lattice.

The pottery appeared to be all of Antonine date. None of it could be assigned to the Flavian period. Its discovery ensures the Lurg Moor fortlet a place on a map of the Antonine system in Scotland. This fortlet and the Antonine fort at Bishopton, 8 miles to the east,³ were probably only two links in a chain of Roman stations along the Renfrewshire coast. Their purpose would be to watch for and provide against enemy landings on the south bank of the Clyde, on the vulnerable west flank of the Antonine Wall.

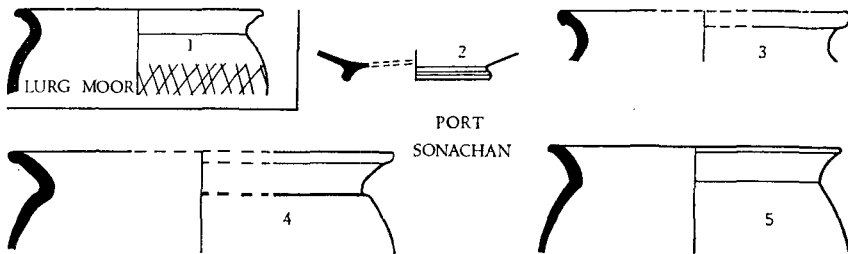


FIG. 10

7. ROMAN POTTERY FROM PORT SONACHAN, ARGYLL, 1961

In 1961, Mr McLean, a farmer at Port Sonachan, found four fragments of Roman coarse pottery in an open drain on a steep slope about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile (maybe less) from Port

¹ *J.R.S.*, XLIII (1953), 105, 107, figs. 24, 25.

² Steer, K. A., in *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXIII (1948-9), 28 ff.

³ *Discovery and Excavation, Scotland*, 1959, 29.

Sonachan Hotel (N.G.R. NN 049206). He gave them to Col. Young, at the Hotel, and Col. Young presented them, through Mr Eric Cregeen, to the Hunterian Museum. Mr Cregeen notes that 'a chambered tomb of Clyde-Solway type stands about 100 yds. away. . . . There is no dwelling in the immediate vicinity – the hotel is the nearest building – so that one cannot suppose the sherds were broken and thrown out by an antiquarian collector in recent centuries. There is an ancient ferry at Port Sonachan, an ancient route from Lorne into mid-Argyll crosses Loch Awe here, and there are ample evidences of a population at any rate in the Early Christian period (e.g. place-name Annat on opposite side of the loch, church of Kilchrenan nearby) and Iron Age duns at no great distance.'

The four potsherds came from four different coarse ware jars, three being from rims and the fourth from a base with footstand. Mr John Gillam kindly examined the pieces, and his views are in agreement with the following descriptions and conclusions.

Fragment of base of small jar, with neatly moulded footstand, diam. about 3 in., of hard grey clay with darker slip. The fabric suggests a late first-century or early second-century date, but so little survives of the jar that a close dating is impossible. (Fig. 10, 2.)

Fragment of jar with fairly upright neck and rim thickening at end. Diam. of rim about 6 in., of hard grey shell-gritted ware with red-brown slip or surface. Mr Gillam notes that 'the ware is probably of Midland origin. It has not the characteristic form of either the late third- to early fourth-century pieces, nor of the late fourth-century Midland and southern shell-gritted wares. I'd be inclined to place it in the second century, or the earlier part of the third. These wares did occasionally get on Hadrian's Wall in the late second century.' (Fig. 10, 3.)

Fragment of coarse black fumed cooking-pot with everted rim, diam. about 8 in. (Gillam's category 1 burnished ware). Probably of third-century date. (Fig. 10, 4.)

Fragment of coarse grey fumed cooking-pot with everted rim, diam. about 6 in. (Gillam's category 1 burnished ware). Probably of third-century date. (Fig. 10, 5.)

The presence of these four potsherds in an open drain at Port Sonachan is so inexplicable that they can only be recorded, without further comment.