

Newstead: the buildings in the western annexe

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ABSTRACT

The two main buildings in the western annexe of the fort at Newstead, Roxburghshire, are interpreted as a mansio and a bath-house. A sequence of development is proposed for them and a new suggestion is made about the garrisoning of the fort in the second Antonine period.

INTRODUCTION

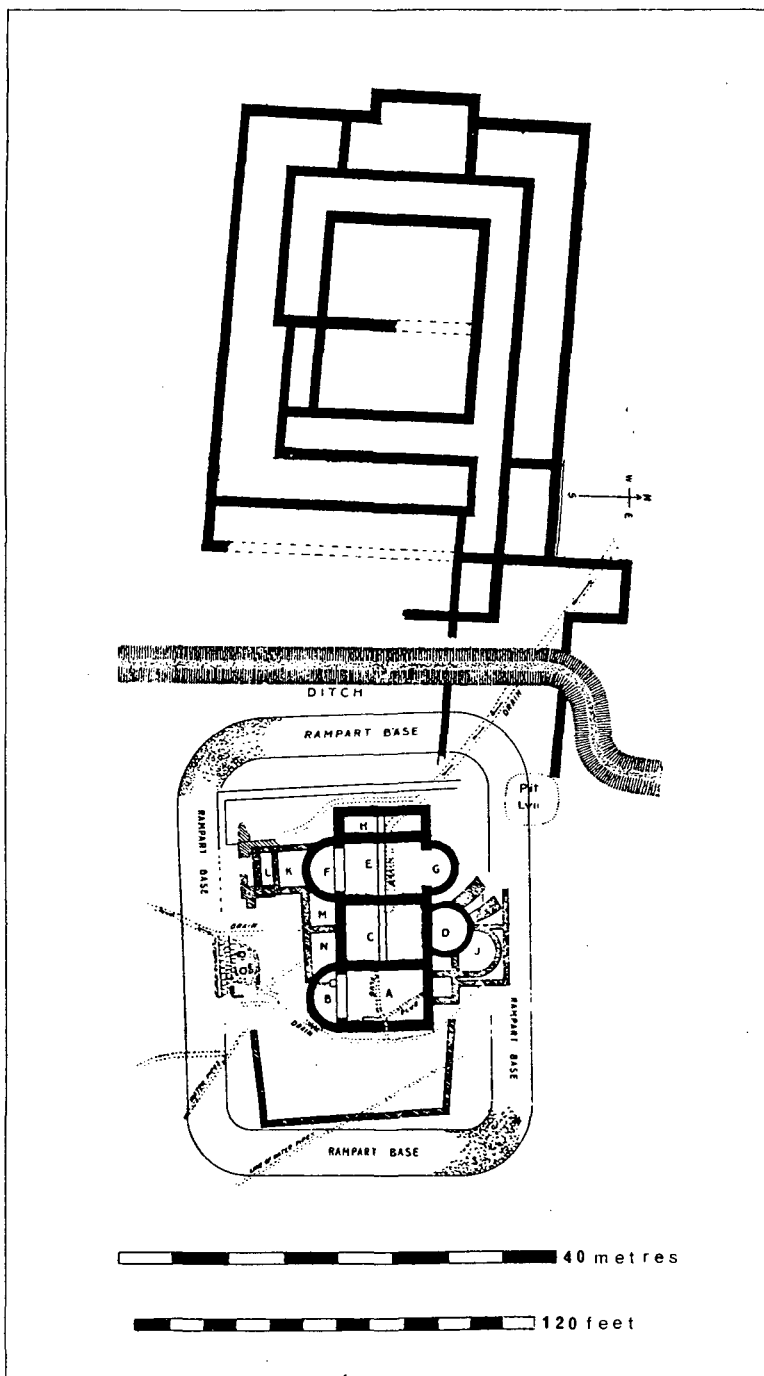
In the western annexe of the fort at Newstead, James Curle (1911, 92–103) recorded two major buildings. Little remained of one of these except the cobble foundations of the walls, but it apparently comprised a courtyard building which underwent some reconstruction during its life (illus 1). The second building was a bath-house with several periods and phases of rebuilding (illus 2).

THE *MANSIO* (illus 3)

The courtyard building can be interpreted as a *mansio*, an accommodation building for soldiers or civilians travelling on government business. In the first century AD it was the duty of magistrates of communities in Italy and the provinces to organize such accommodation. Where there was an established pattern of nucleated settlement along the roads, accommodation could be provided in private houses and a purpose-built *mansio* was not necessary. Where no such pattern existed, as in the regions of Britain which successively came under Roman military control, the army constructed purpose-built *mansiones* beside forts. Apart from Newstead, *mansiones* recognized in Scotland comprise the so-called ‘temporary compound for officers’ outside the legionary fortress at Inchtuthil (Pitts & St Joseph 1985, 207–22); Glenlochar (Frere & St Joseph 1983, 28 (fig 3) & 128); and Building 18 in the ‘south camp’ at Camelon (Christison & Buchanan 1901, 371–3 and pl V (facing 370)). The writer is undertaking a study of *mansiones* in Britain and more detailed arguments for their identification will be given there. The present paper is confined to an interpretation of the remains excavated at Newstead. For convenience of description the divisions of the plan have been numbered, though it should be borne in mind that these do not represent individual rooms. It is probable that only the foundations of the load-bearing walls, and perhaps not all of these, were traced.

The original *mansio* (illus 3A) comprised four ranges of rooms (1–4) round a courtyard measuring 16.8 × 13.1 m. Towards the courtyard the ranges were fronted by galleries or porticoes (5–8). The northern portico (7) was extended to the east (9) to give access to areas

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ILLUS 1 The Buildings in the Western Annexe (Curle 1911, Fig 7).

10, 13, and 14. Area 10 was situated on the west side of an open yard and was probably stabling or a vehicle-shed entered from the yard. Area 13 may have been a similar building for the carriages and animals that were part of the establishment of the *mansio* itself, and was entered from a separate walled compound (12). Area 14 could have been accommodation for drivers and others concerned with looking after the *mansio* transport. This transport would have been available only to high-ranking officials with permits (*diplomata*) issued by the provincial governor.

A room (11) which probably originally measured 6.1 × 8.2 m projected to the west of the west wing of the courtyard building. Apart from room 14 no other room divisions were noted. Room 11 seems to have had a particular function that caused it to be accorded special structural treatment. The most likely possibility is that it formed the main entrance hall to the courtyard building. The accommodation provided in this building probably took the form of relatively small rooms of uniform size on at least one side of the courtyard. More spacious rooms may also have been provided for high-ranking travellers. There would have been a communal dining-room and accommodation for the staff. Across the yard to the east in its own walled enclosure was a bath-building (see below).

In a second phase (illus 3b) a wall was built across the southern portico (5) which was rebuilt to the east as a narrower corridor (15). The wall continued across and divided the courtyard. The eastern part of the courtyard (16) was probably now roofed and subdivided into rooms to create extra accommodation. Room 11 was enlarged to virtually the full width of the courtyard by taking in part of 3 to the south. A further alteration was the addition of 17 on the eastern side of 10. Area 17 also incorporated the southern end of 13 so that this was now reduced in size or else simply formed an unroofed extension of compound 12. If 17 was a replacement for 13, and 10 continued to have the same function as before, there was an increase in the space for vehicles and animals to match the increased accommodation provided by 16.

The *mansio* belongs to the Flavian period at Newstead as the north wall of 12 was cut by a large pit (LVII) which contained debris from the Flavian occupation, and both the north and south walls were cut by a ditch belonging to the western annexe of the Antonine fort.

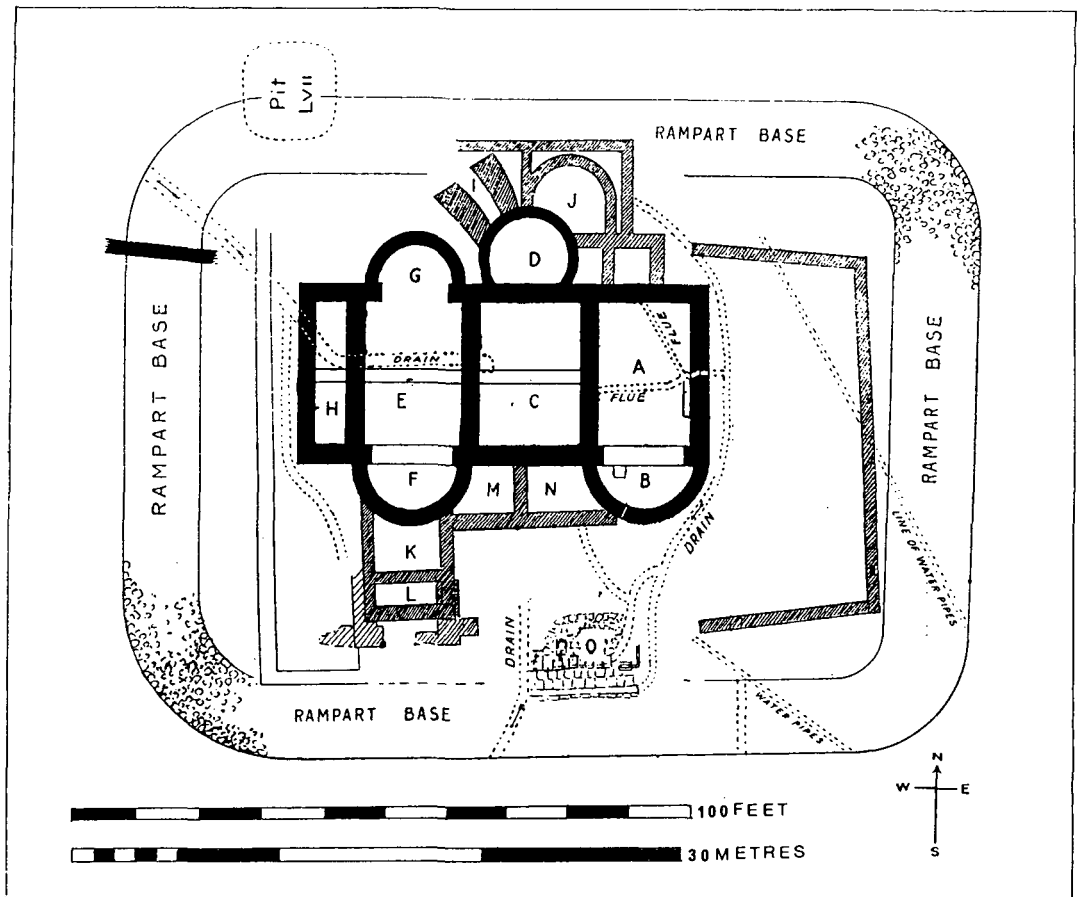
THE BATHS

Although Curle regarded rooms A–H as the original nucleus of the bath-building and the other rooms to the north and south as later additions, it is clear that K–N to the south belonged to an earlier building. Rooms J and P to the north functioned together with rooms A–C and E–H in the Antonine baths, and were superseded during the life of the building by room D and its successive furnaces R and I.

THE *MANSIO* BATHS

Room L overlay fragments of substantial walling which comprised the earliest remains on the site of the bath (Curle 1911, 96–7). To the west and south of this was an enclosure wall. A drain headed from the walling below L towards this wall and then ran parallel to it. It is possible, though by no means certain, that the walling below L represents a cold bath occupying one corner of a cold room (*frigidarium*) in a bath-building.

A wall which formed the inner side of the more southerly latrine channel was in line with the southern line of the early enclosure wall and Curle (1911, 100) suggested that it formed

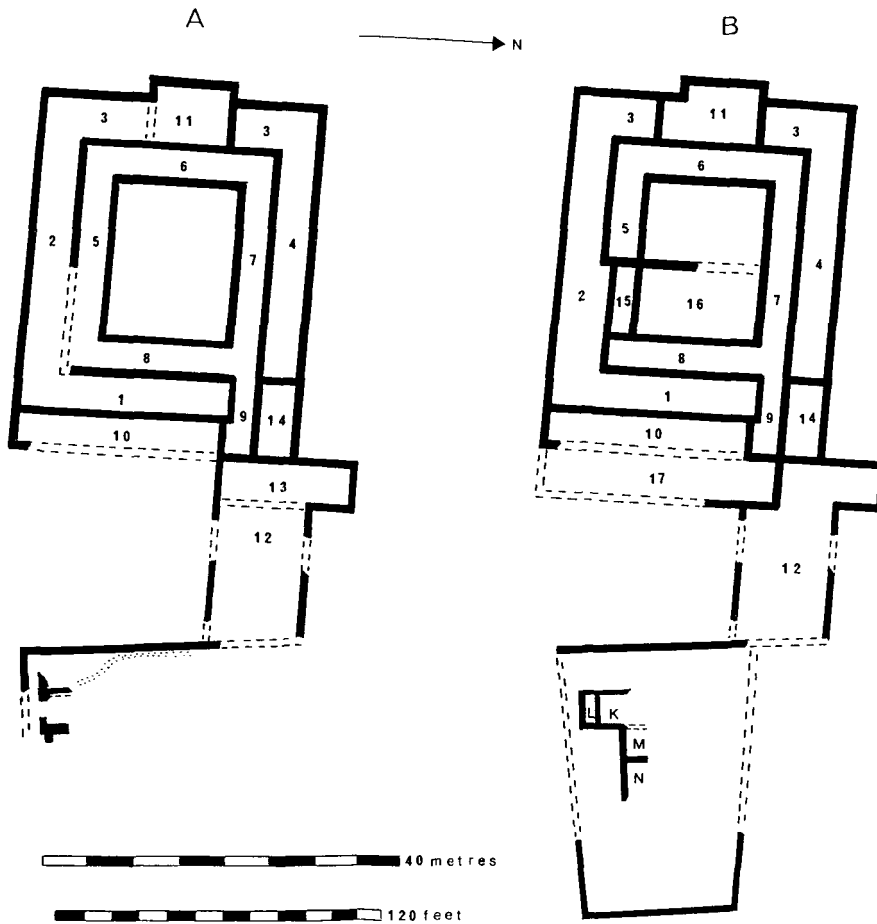


ILLUS 2 The bath-buildings (Curle 1911, Fig 8).

part of the same wall. However, it seems more likely that it was a new construction during the life of the latrine (see below).

The early bath-building, if that is what it was, was superseded by a new building of which rooms *K*, *L*, *M*, and *N* were identified. The walls of rooms *M* and *N* are described as resting on river cobbles, like the *mansio* walls, and unlike those of *A–H* which had foundations of broken pieces of sandstone and blue river-stones mixed with lime. The planning of rooms *K–N* suggests that they formed part of a bath-building, with room *L* functioning as a cold plunge-bath. This is confirmed by the tile debris found in Pit LVII which included ‘one or two fragments of *tegulae mammatae* – tiles with points projecting so as to leave an open space for hot air between them and the wall’ (Curle 1911, 103). Such tiles were not used in wall-jacketings in hypocausts later than the first century AD, by the end of which they were superseded by flat tiles and ceramic spacers or by *tubuli* (box flue-tiles).

The bath-building incorporating rooms *K–N* seems to have been in a walled compound. Its east wall was found running north/south close to the later Antonine rampart on the east, and it turned to the west at both ends. If the more southerly of these returns is projected it meets the south-west corner of the earlier enclosure wall, suggesting that the western side of this earlier enclosure wall remained standing but its southern side was demolished and

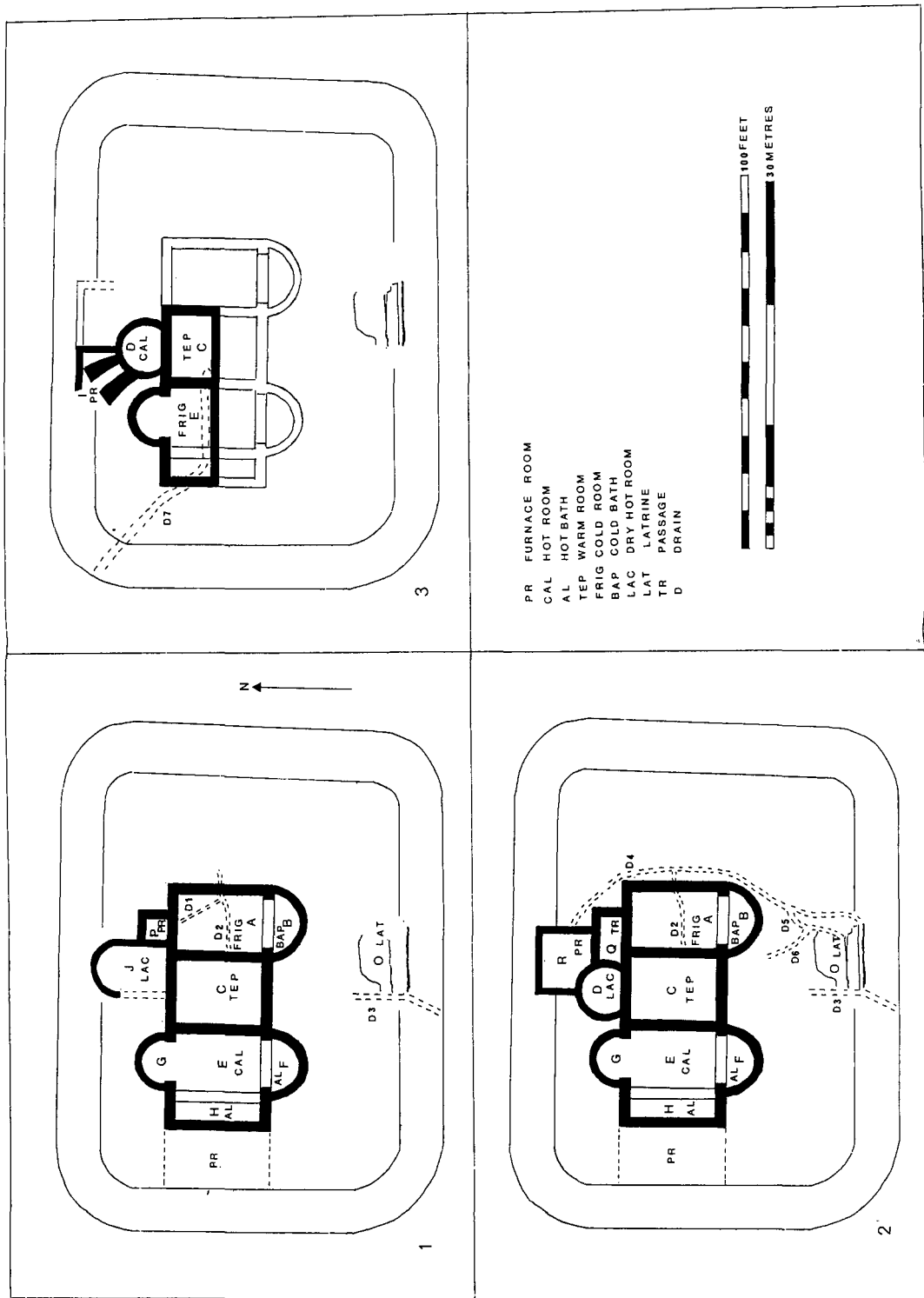
ILLUS 3 The development of the *mansio*.

replaced. The line of the northern wall of the new enclosure followed an alignment parallel to the north and south walls of compound 12 and the other east/west walls of the *mansio*.

THE FORT BATHS

With the Antonine re-occupation of Newstead the *mansio* site was not re-utilized. A ditch was dug through the north and south walls of compound 12. However, the site of the *mansio* baths was used for the construction of a military bath-building which was surrounded by a defensive clay rampart on a cobble foundation. This rampart sealed Pit LVII which contained debris from the Flavian and Trajanic occupation. In addition it sealed a line of cobbles which was also found below the *opus signinum* sub-floor of room J and presumably belonged to the pre-Antonine occupation. The relationship of room J to the line of the rampart suggests that the latter was an early feature constructed before the decision was taken to add a *laconicum* to the bath-building. The rampart must have been cut back at this point when the decision was taken.

The earliest Antonine baths (illus 4.1) comprised rooms A–C and E–J. Curle correctly



ILLUS 4 The Phases of the Antonine Bath-house.

identified most of these rooms: *A frigidarium/apodyterium* (cold-room and undressing-room); *B baptisterium* (cold bath); *C tepidarium* (warm room); *E caldarium* (hot room) with an *alveus* (hot bath) in *F* and a *labrum* (cold basin) in *G*. Room *H* was a rectangular hot bath and, as Curle realized despite his failure to find traces of it, the *praefurnium* (furnace-room) must have been to the west of *H*.

On the north side of the baths, *J* represents a *laconicum* with its own stoking-area (*P*). The identification of *P* as a *praefurnium* is based on the drain (*D1*) (labelled 'flue' on Curle's plan) which leads from it below the floor of room *A* to join a second drain (*D2*) from the *tepidarium* (*C*). After passing through the east wall of *A* the drain was cut by a later drain (*D4*) from the north. Such drains are found at the Bearsden bath-house leading from the *laconicum*, the first *tepidarium* (further from the furnace), as well as from the main furnace, and they connected with drains from the cold-bath and the shower-emplacement in the cold-room to flush the latrine (plan supplied by Dr D J Breeze). It is thought that they removed condensation from hypocaust basements. *D1* and *D2* belong to this class, and the *opus signinum* floor of *J* must therefore have been the sub-floor of a hypocaust. *J* must have been entered from the *tepidarium* (room *C*) and in this position cannot have been anything but a *laconicum* (dry heat room). The decision to build *J* was presumably taken while construction work on the baths was in progress in view of the junction of the drains below room *A*. It would have been easier to have taken *D1* round the exterior of the building if *J* had been added after the baths came into use.

To the south of the baths against the Antonine rampart was the latrine (*O*). A straight length of drain (*D3*) runs on the west side of this. It probably received the discharge from the cold bath in *B*, and one or both of the hot baths in *F* and *H*, though the connections were not traced. It would have passed immediately inside the west wall of the latrine with the seating set above it. A similar row of seating on the south side does not seem to have existed in the earliest Antonine phase.

A second phase of alterations involved the *laconicum* and the latrine (illus 4.2). Room *J* was replaced by room *D*, a new *laconicum* of truncated circular plan and a connecting passage (*Q*) was built between this and the *frigidarium* (*A*). A new stoking-area (*R*) was provided to the north. Again, a drain (*D4*) led from the stoking-area round the building to the latrine (*O*). It cut the earlier drain (*D2*) issuing from room *A*, but presumably the discharge from this now emptied into the new drain. *D4* ran along the south side of the latrine before discharging into *D3*, and presumably there was now a second row of seating along the south side of the latrine. *D4* was later diverted to a more westerly course before reaching the latrine (*D5*) and was joined by a new drain (*D6*) from the direction of room *C*. *D6* may have replaced *D2*. Within the latrine *D5* seems to have become the southern latrine channel about a metre to the north of its predecessor. The wall that lay between the two channels was probably built at this time and formed the new back wall of the latrine building. Curle thought that it was an earlier wall reused in the latrine, but it would have been sensible to have carried a new wall down to the bottom of the earlier latrine channel, or deeper, and this could have caused the impression that it formed the inner side of the earlier channel.

There was a final, drastic, reorganization of the building (illus 4.3). This involved the creation of a new stoke-hole (*I*) marked by an elongated flue and a fragment of a wall to the north which presumably continued round to enclose a *praefurnium* similar to room *R* in the preceding phase. This elongated furnace was unnecessary for a *laconicum* and the implication is that room *D* had finally been converted to a *caldarium*. This ties in very neatly with the lack of evidence for a *praefurnium* to the west of *H* where it must have been located during all but

the last phase of the bath-building. The original *praefurnium* was presumably thoroughly robbed at the beginning of the final phase. At the same time the east supporting-wall of the hot-bath (*H*) was dismantled and a wall built across rooms *H*, *E*, and *C*, reducing them to roughly half their former area. A new drain (*D7*) ran alongside this wall on the north and through the west wall of room *H* and across the area of the *mansio* (*12 & 13*). In the final phase, if *D* was the *caldarium*, the northern half of *C* was the *tepidarium*, and the northern halves of *H* and *E* along with *G* formed a *frigidarium* and *apodyterium*. The rest of the building was presumably disused.

The size of the original Antonine bath-building is larger than that of baths provided for an infantry cohort (eg Bothwellhaugh), while in its reduced form it matches the capacity of such baths more closely. This change presumably has implications for the size of the garrisons occupying the fort at Newstead in the Antonine period. Richmond (1952, 19–24) believed that in the first Antonine period the garrison of Newstead comprised two cohorts of Legio XX and the *ala Vocontiorum*. He suggested that the excavated bath-house was for the use of the *quingenary ala*, while separate baths for the legionaries remained, and still remain, to be found (*ibid*, 23). In the second Antonine period he argued that the garrison was the military *ala Petriana*. If so, the troopers of this unit presumably made use of the unlocated baths previously used by the legionaries. Who then used the excavated baths, which were reduced in size, but not abandoned? Without the aid of epigraphy the question is not answerable, but the type of unit may be indicated by such combinations as the *vexillatio Gaesatorum Raetorum* and *Cohors I Vangionum* at Risingham (*RIB*, 1216–17) or *Cohors I Vardullorum* and the *numerus Exploratorum Bremenensium* at High Rochester (*RIB*, 1262) in the third century. It is proposed, very tentatively, that a *numerus*, or equivalent unit, may have been garrisoned with a milliary auxiliary regiment at Newstead in the second Antonine period.

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