WALL AND ITS ROMAN ROADS.

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The Roman conquest of Britain was undertaken by the Emperor Claudius in A.D.43. The invading forces sailed from the neighbourhood of Boulogne in three divisions and landed on the coast of Kent, probably at the three ports of Richborough, Dover, and Lymne. Thence, moving rapidly through the fertile and easy planes of northern Kent, they quickly forced the Medway and pushed on to the Thames. Here they met with the first serious check, but the river was forded, the enemy put to flight, and Essex and Cunobline's capital of Camulodunum, the modern Colchester, were seized almost immediately.

From the base round the Thames estuary a rapid advance was made. Within four years, by A.D.47, theRoman arms were definitely established on the Welsh border, and on the edge of the Yorkshire and Derbyshire hills.

The original expeditionary force consisted of four legions, brigades, each of some 5,000 heavy infantry and of auxiliary troops, perhaps in all, some 40,000 men. The four Legions were the II Augusta, the IX Hispana, the XIV Gemina, and the XX Valeria Victrix. There were

some temporary reinforcements which were probably soon withdrawn. The late Professor Haverfield points out that, as the campaign developed, the general army, just described, appears to have been broken up into three independent forces, which spread out fanwise from the London - Colchester base. Each force would, in accordance with the usual practice, contain both legionaries and auxiliaries.
To the left wing, which included the II Augusta, was allotted the conquest of Southern England and South Wales. The right wing, which included the IX Hispana, swept the Eastern Counties, while the centre force, with which we are alone concerned tonight, penetrated the Midlands.

This last mentioned force included the Legions XIV Gemina, and XX Valeria Victrix.

By A.D.47, or very soon afterwards, the XIV Legion was at Wroxeter, and the XX Legion at Chester.

I have briefly outlined the Roman plan of campaign, because the advance of the centre force throws light on the Watling Street. The line of advance of each of the three sections of the invading forces coincides with one of the arterial Roman roads. The Watling Street was, in

its origin, the military road constructed by the centre force to maintain communication with its base. Commencing in London, it extends generally in a north-westerly direction through St.Albans, Towcester, High Cross, Mancetter, to Wall, and on through to Gailey and Stretton to Wroxeter, with a branch to Chester. It is of first century date.

A second Roman road, known as the Rykneild Street, crosses the Watling Street at Wall. This was an important highway, though of less importance than the Watling Street. It commences from the Fosseway at Bourton-on-the-Water in Gloucestershire, leaves the Cotswolds at Weston-sub-Edge near Broadway, crosses the Avon at Bidford, passes through Alcester and Birmingham, crosses the Thame just below Perry Bridge, passes through Sutton Park, where it is well preserved in its original state, and on to Wall. From Wall the Rykneild Street continues northwards through Burton-on-Trent to Littlechester near Derby. Some miles beyond Littlechester its course becomes undertain, but it probably threw off a branch to

Buxton, and finally, joined the road from Lincoln to York. The Ryknield Street, or at all events the northern portion of it, is probably not older than the second century.

Having outlined the courses of the two Roads which cross at Wall, I propose to give a more detailed description of the portions in the immediate vicinity.

The next station to Wall on the Watling Street in the direction of London is Mancetter, ancient Manduessidum. The distance between these two stations is almost 15 miles, and the general direction of the road is North-West by West. It is set out in straight lengths. From Mancetter to the Sutton and Lichfield main road, a modern highway follows the line of the Roman road. From this point to Wall, about three quarters of a mile, the Watling Street has fallen out of use. It crosses a shallow valley on the West side of the Sutton and Lichfield Branch of the L. M. & S. Railway, and it is probable that, when no longer kept in repair, it became founderous, thus causing a diversion of the traffic on to the higher ground further North. Swinfen land and its continuation, the present road from the Sutton - Lichfield road to Wall

Village, doubtless came into existence after this section of the Watling Street fell into disrepair.

The fact that a Parish boundary follows the diversion, and not the original Watling Street, indicates that the latter ceased to be used at an early date.

From the Sutton-Lichfield road the line of the Watling Street is continued by an occupation road leading to Lawton Grange. The present road occupies only a portion of the space between the hedges, and on the North side the remainder of the space is occupied by a strip of rough grass with bushes, and is on a higher level than the road. There is a ditch running close to the hedge on each side, that on the South side is very deep. These ditches may represent the original Roman ditches.

At Lawton Grange the occupation road ceases, but there is a track and public footpath in the same line to the bridge under the railway.

Immediately West of the railway is a large arable field comprising the enclosures Nod.225, 75, and 129 on Staffordshire Sheet LVIII-6 of the 1923 Edition of the O.S. When I first examined the road in 1926 the separate enclosures existed, Nos.225 and 75 being rough pasture.

The ridge of the road was plainly visible. It was very irregular having apparently been dug into in places for the purpose of obtaining gravel.

In the year 1930 these two enclosures were ploughed. I am informed that they had not been previously ploughed within living memory. Before the ploughing I was allowed by the kindness of Mr.Foden, the owner, to cut a trench across the line of the street in Field No.75. (marked E-F on the map) The section revealed about 12" of coarse gravel with large pebble-stones on a bed of sand 2' thick, the latter resting on trunks and branches of trees laid on the original land surface. Some of the trunks were still sound and a section of one, probably an alder, 6" in diameter, was sawn through and removed. The trees appeared to have been laid diagonally to the line of the road. There was no trace of ditches and, as the gravel had been spread, probably by ancient ploughing, when the land was enclosed and brought into cultivation, it was impossible to determine the exact width of the road. It was, however, probably about 20'. The absence of ditches may be owing to this portion of the road crossing marshy ground, and having been constructed on a causeway.

There was no pottery or other datable material in the bed of the road.

When both fields had been ploughed the road appeared as an irregular stony zone varying in width. The plough brought to light a great quantity of Roman debris, mostly within 20 yards on either side of the road, but particularly on the North East side. This included blocks of sandstone, roofing tiles, pieces of millstone, and much pottery. The Samian included Forms 37 31 and 38. The earliest piece was dated by the late Mr. Thomas May F.S.A. A.D. 80-120. One piece, of Form 37, bears vertically among the decoration the Stamp of the potter ADVOCISVS of Lezoux A.D.138-192. A complete flagon of buff clay 7" in height (2nd Century) was also found, together with a piece of New Forest ware.

Alongside the road on the North East side were several patches of red earth, very different to the black peaty soil of the field. It is thought that these may represent the disintegrated clay floors of small buildings, but no foundations or post holes were observed. The public footpath follows very closely the line of the road across Fields O.S.Nos.225 and 75.

The next enclosure is the small Field O.S.No.74. This field is arable, and was fallow in 1926. No trace of the road was discernible, though it crosses the extreme southern end of the field. The public footpath diverges towards the North from the line of the road. In November 1926 Mr.J.W.Brooks cut a trench C-D across the line of the street parallel with and close to the Western hedge of this field. The section showed the road to be 20' wide from side to side, but as there were no ditches, and the gravel extended right up to the Southern boundary hedge, it is uncertain whether the section exposed showed the entire width. The road was composed of a bed of gravel 18" deep in the centre and thinning out somewhat towards the sides. The gravel rested on a bed of dark earth 9" in depth lying on the natural subsoil. In digging the trench a bronze Fibula (date circa A.D.100), a globular ribbed bead of blue glass, some badly weathered pieces of Samian, and a number of pieces of coarse pottery, were found.

Melon bead

The road passes thence into Field O.S.No.67. It is in this field that it is crossed by the Ryknield Street. A number of trenches were cut across the

line of the Watling Street in this and the next field O.S.No.68. A great deal of gravel was met with, but no trace of road ditches was discovered. We could only come to the conclusion that this portion of the road, which was on dry sandy soil, had been constructed without ditches. Much of the road material had evidently been removed, and what was left had been spread by the plough; it was consequently impossible to determine the original width of the street. Much Roman debris was scattered about, including the greater part of an upper millstone of Derbyshire grit, roofing tiles, pottery, and iron slag. The millstone was " in diameter, and had been used for grinding some substance which had cut in it a number of concentric circles. It might have been used in a pugmill for grinding clay. Although no foundations were observed, it seems probable that there had been erections of some kind alongside the road used for industrial purposes.

There were no surface indications of the road in O.S.Nos.69, 66, 65, and 64, and no excavation was undertaken. These are all arable fields.

In carrying out road widening at the cross roads the bank was cut away and the fence set back at the

North Western corner of Field No.64. The gravel of the road was exposed in the bank, and several pieces of pottery were found. Mr.Ryman of Manor Farm, Wall, informed me that he had removed many loads of gravel from this corner of the field.

Only at one point has it been possible to examine the road in Wall Village. Through the Village the course of the Watling Street is slightly to the North of and parallel with the modern Road. The change of direction from North West to West probably took place by an angular turn, in the field known as "Castle Croft", the highest point in the Village. The Roman Buildings in "the Butts" lay alongside the Street, and the Roman metalling has been found beneath the forecourt of the Museum. The Brook, which probably formed the Western limit of the Roman settlement, was crossed a few yards to the North of the existing road bridge. Codrington says that "Watling Street runs straight due West for four "and a half miles to high ground (500') on the West of "Brownhills, with a parish boundary following it nearly "all the way".

For some distance Westward of the Village the course of the Roman road lies slightly to the North of the present road. Excavations undertaken in 1927 in Field No.201 O.S 1923 Edition revealed sections of the North ditch of the Watling Street. It had a width of 7' 6", and a depth of 4' 6" + 1" top soil. A piece of modern sand-faced floor quarry was found in the bottom of the ditch, from which it is inferred that the ditch was filled up in recent times, probably when the frontage was straightened and the existing hedge planted. The ditch on the South side of the modern road at this point may roughly represent the road ditch on the other side of the Roman road.

We will now turn to the Ryknield Street. In 1926 I made some examination of the course of this road in the immediate vicinity of Wall. It approaches from the South in a Northerly direction along the line of Ashcroft Lane. At the point where the land turns towards Chesterfield, the Roman road passes into Field O.S.175 (Edition 1923) which was then pasture. In this field there was no visible trace of the road. Thence it passes into an arable field O.S.176. This field was planted with the

large
/cabbages used for feeding cattle. The Western portion was very stony, and the crop had almost entirely failed. The ridge of the road could be clearly traced across the next field, O.S. 134 which was planted with potatoes. The next field O.S. 127 was planted with cabbages. In the Western corner the ground was full of stones and gravel, and the crop had entirely failed.

The road now passes into O.S.126. This field is of a very strange shape, and includes a narrow neck joining two wider portions. Prolonging the same straight line, the road passes through the neck. This field was under corn. No difference in the crop on the line of the road could be detected. Continuing in the same direction the road passes along the line of the Eastern hedges of O.S.79, 78 and 77. A good deal of stone and gravel was visible along the hedge of O.S.78.

The next field is O.S.67, which contains the Watling Street crossing. A complete section A—B of the Ryknield Street was obtained in this field. It was found to be a gravel road 27' 6" in width. It was of slight construction, consisting of about 6" of gravel cambered. The crown of the road had been ploughed

away. There was a pronounced "V" shaped ditch on the East side, and a shallow one on the West. Both ditches contained pottery. The Eastern ditch was followed up to the Watling Street crossing, at which point it ceased.

The result of excavation at the intersection of the roads was disappointing. A large gravelled area, of indeterminate shape, was encountered, and a small patch paved with blocks of sandstone. Beyond the crossing the Ryknield Street turns towards the North East. This portion has not been examined in detail. The stony debris of the road may be seen in a corner of field O.S.No.74. A little further on the present road to Wall is crossed West of the Railway bridge; the road then passes to the East side of the Railway, and follows the line of Knowle Lane towards Lichfield.

These are the somewhat meagre results of a detailed examination of the line of these two roads in the vicinity of Wall. The conclusion which one must draw is, that they have suffered so severely from modern cultivation, and the removal of the materials of which they were made, that further information is unlikely to be forthcoming. It is a sad loss to Archaeology that no record was made before the days of Inclosure Acts and

Turnpikes. These roads must, in those days, have been as conspicuous and as easily traceable as the well known length of Ryknield Street in Sutton Park. But, until the time of Camden (1607) the site of Letocetum, or of Etocetum as Wall is designated in the Antonine Itinerary, was not even identified. Camden mentions, as the strongest proof in support of his identification - "the military-way running from hence, with a fair, bold "and uninterrupted ridge till it comes to the river "Penck".

In view of its situation at the crossing of Watling Street and Ryknield Street, the Roman Station of Letocetum must have been of considerable importance. It is mentioned once in the Antonine Itinerary, namely, in Iter II. This describes the way from the Roman Frontier Wall to the port of Richborough through Carlisle, York, Chester, Wroxeter, Wall, London, and Canterbury. Why this curiously indirect route is given, I cannot explain. Suffice it to say, that it is the longest and probably the most important of the XV routes described. Obviously the Watling Street was the direct route between London, the important town

of Wroxeter, the legionary fortress of Chester, and the stations in Lancashire and North Wales. It was also one of the recognised routes from London to York and the Roman Wall. There must consequently have been a continuous stream of traffic passing through Wall on the Watling Street alone, while that from North and South along the Ryknield Street must have added considerably to the number of travellers who would pass through or break their journey at this station.

The next station on the Watling Street, in the direction of London, is Mancetter, 15 miles distant, and to the North West was Pennocrucium, which the Itinerary states was 12 Roman miles from Wall. It is with diffidence that I refer to the situation of the latter place, because I know that your Society is working at the solution of this problem. If it was on or near the point at which the river Penck crosses the Watling Street, as its name seems to imply, it would be approximately 13½ English miles, or about 14½ Roman miles distant from Wall, in which case there is some error in the Inventory in the form in which it has come

come down to us. The Itinerary gives the distance as 12 Roman miles. I hope I may, before long, have the pleasure of hearing that your Society has been successful in solving this little problem.

A good deal has been written by Archaeologists about Wall. To Camden must be given the credit of definitely identifying the Etocetum of the Itinerary with that place. There are many references to Roman "finds" at and in the vicinity of Wall from Camden onwards. Excavation of a somewhat desultory character has been from time to time carried out, commencing with that of Colonel W.J.Bagnall reported in the Birmingham Archaeological Society's Transactions of 1873. The most important discoveries were those of Mr.Mott, for the North Staffordshire Field Club, in 1912-13, when the Baths and Villa or Guest House were excavated and planned. But, up to the present time, no conclusion has been reached as to the area occupied by the Roman town.

At Mancetter the earthen rampart or vallum enclosing the Roman station, may still be seen. It is rectangular (with rounded corners) measuring 200 yards in length and 150 yards in width. Watling Street passes through it parallel with the longer sides. No such

enclosure can be seen at Wall.

Cameden refers to "pieces of wall remaining there "and including about two acres called Castle Croft". He also says, "They show a place whereby the great "foundation, they supposed stood a Temple, and produce "the most certain evidences of its antiquity and "Roman coins".

Shaw give a very circumstantial account of "a great Roman valum or barricade extending from Wall "northward through Pipe Hill parallel to the brook "which passing last of Pipe Hill goes through Wall". He describes it as being constructed of whole trunks of oak trees standing on end close to each other, and fixed some depth in the ground. It had a fosse or dyke 12 feet wide at the top, 5 feet deep, and 3 feet wide at the bottom. Shaw states that this barricade had been traced 500 yards, not contained in a straight line but strengthened by flanking bastions placed not at regular intervals, but according to the nature of the ground, so as to inclose a natural swell or band of earth. This description is reinforced with an illustration. Neither the description nor the

illustration conforms to any example known to me of a Roman military work, and, even if the Roman station were so defended, it is inconceivable that the defences should have extended to Pipe Hill.

Bagnall's excavations were conducted partly in a field to the West of the Church called "the Butts", and partly in "Castle Croft" which lies to the East of the lane leading from Watling Street to Pipe Hill.
In the Butts, also known as "the Great Butts", the excavations were carried out in thelowest part of the field, and several chambers were discovered. There is no doubt that these were part of the Baths afterwards excavated by Mr Mott. There was also a pavement of common stones running for a short distance towards the West and having the appearance of a road.
Bagnall also states that excavations were subsequently carried on higher up in the same field, where many other foundations were laid bare. These probably belonged to the Villa or guest house, also explored by Mr Mott.
Bagnall goes on to say that in Castle Croft the remains of a strong wall, about 11 feet in thickness, were easily traced for about 50 yards from West to East. He had the ground excavated on each side of this wall for a

considerable distance, and at intervals, in order to see whether any buildings branched off from it, but he could not find any. Unfortunately no plan of the Bagnall excavations is known to exist, and, from the available information, it is impossible to locate the position of this so called wall. I will only remark that it was unusually broad, too broad in fact to be a wall of a domestic building. Was it a wall ?
It is described as running from West to East, that is, in the same direction as Watling Street, which lies under the Southern side of Castle Croft. Could it have been the substructure of the Street ? This point can only be cleared up by further exploration.

I have summarised above all that Bagnall recorded as the result of his own observations. The rest of his paper is based on information obtained in the Village, or extracted from Lomax's Guide to the City of Lichfield.

The work carried out by Mr.Mott, just before the War, added very considerably to our knowledge of Wall in Roman times. Two buildings, both in the Baths, were excavated and planned. The first, in the upper part of the field, is a building of the

Italian or Courtyard type. It is described as a Villa, but, situated as it is, in close proximity to the Baths, it may well have been an Inn or Guest House for the accommodation of travellers. It extends 100 feet from North to South, and 75 feet from East to West, andit consists of a central rectangular court surrounded by a corridor from which ac cess to the various rooms is gained. Lower down, but not far from the Villa, is the public bath building. A small portion of this building extended to an adjoining field, and could not be examined. The excavated portion measures some 130 feet from North to South, and the width is rather more than 100 feet. It is a very complete example of a Roman bath building, with the usual appartments and accessories. Both buildings have been fully described by Mr Mott, with excellent plans.

I have attempted to get together such information as is available as to the character and extent of this Roman town, but without very definite results. To sum up - Substantial Roman buildings existed in the Butts, and most probably in Castle Croft also. There were probably buildings of a less permanent character extending on both sides of Watling

Street as far as or beyond its junction with the Ryknield Street. The presence of iron slag and numerous fragments of Millstones suggest that this part of the Settlement was an industrial one. I think it may be taken that the occupied area was bounded on the West by the brook which crosses the Watling Street at the bottom of the hill. The ground beyond was undoubtedly marsh until it was drained and brought into cultivation. Moreover, it is known that the Roman Cemetery lies on either side of the Watling Street on the rising ground beyond the brook. In the present state of our knowledge, the limits of the Settlement in other directions cannot be determined.

On the higher ground, West of the brook, a number of Roman burials have from time to time been discovered on both sides of the Watling Street.

In October 1927, by kind permission of Mr.W.W.Ryman the owner, I was allowed to conduct excavations in Field No.201 O.S.1923 Edition, on the North side of the road.

A small area only was examined, and, as the time available did not permit of complete stripping, trenches were dug commencing near the road and extending obliquely into the field. Nine graves were discovered, all of interments after cremation. The graves did not appear to be arranged according to any plan, but they were more numerous near the road than at a greater distance from it. In all cases the urns were in black earth containing wood charcoal, and in some cases calcined bones. The burials were from 1' to 2' below the surface, and in most cases the urns had been broken by the plough or by pressure from above.
In some cases a group of vessels was found, apparently belonging to a single burial. One interment included a small vase of greenish glass, recovered entire. With it were a necklace of glass beads, a bronze finger ring, a bone counter, and parts of a child's feeding bottle of hard grey clay. There is little doubt that this was the grave of

a child.

The Pre-Roman technique of at least one of the vessels, and the oblique rims and contours of others, indicate an early date, first or early second Century.

During some excavation work carried out by Mr. Francis Jackson in 1922 a small bronze bowl was found, which is particularly valuable as evidence of Christianity in the district. It is of Roman workmanship, about 3½" in diameter, and of very think metal. The side shows some enrichments of simple form, but much obliterated with age. The chief interest is in the Christian monogram " ☧ " very distinctly embossed on the underside of the base. (Described and illustrated in the Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society Vol.L (1924) p.50)

It is not known where this bowl now is. H.R.H.

There is another Roman site lying a mile to the South East of Wall, but actually in the parish of Shenstone, which was visited last Autumn by a number of the members of your Society. It lies in a large arable field, some 29 acres in extent. The field extends from the Sutton Coldfield and Lichfield main road on the East, to the Sutton

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and Lichfield branch of the London Midland & Scottish Railway on the West. It is 600 yards South of the Watling Street, and only a little further East of the Ryknield Street.

The Roman site occupies the middle portion of Field No. 283, which is slightly raised above the surrounding land. On the South side it falls to the Crane Brook, and on the Northern and Eastern sides to a small tributary stream of the former rising in the higher land in the direction of Wall Village. This stream now flows in a well defined artificial Channel, and joins the Crane Brook below Shenstone Mill Pool. Before the land was inclosed and drained the shallow valley, through which it flowed, must have been little better than a swamp. On the West, towards the Ryknield Street, the low lying peaty meadows beyond the Railway testify to the prevalence of similar conditions.

From the foregoing description it will be seen that, in Roman times, the central portion of Field no.283 was a small area of comparatively dry land surrounded by water or marsh. The best access is from the North East, along high land which extends from the Watling Street to within a short distance of the site. But, even in approaching from this direction, it would be necessary to cross the valley of the tributary

stream above referred to.

The discovery of the site is worth recording, because of the entire absence of surface indications.

In the year 1929 the greater part of the field was under swedes, and the remainder under sugar-beet. Mr.Foden, the owner, noticed three sides of a rectangular inclosure, with rounded corners, marked out by swedes which had grown "stronger" than the rest. There were double lines of strong swedes about 8 yards apart on the North and South sides, increasing to about 12 yards apart on the West side, which appeared to have a convex profile. The Eastern side of the inclosure was in that portion of the field which was under sugar-beet, and could not be seen. Mr.Charles Foden made a rough plan of the inclosure, which proved of considerable assistance in later investigations.

The discovery was, by the kindness of Miss.E.D.Henderson of Wall, brought to my notice early in 1930. In February 1930 I inspected the field, which had been recently ploughed. There were no surface indications whatever. In 1930 the field was under oats, with clover to follow. In July of that year it was observed from the air by Mr.H.T.Testar, who reported that he saw the complete inclosure in the ripening oats, and that the lines were double. A fortnight later

he again flew over the site, but the inclosure was not then visible, probably owing to the ripening of the crop. He took aerial photos, showing the lines of old fences, which had been removed, but no trace of the inclosure. By kind permission of Mr.Foden I have been enabled to carry out excavations on the site in the Autumn of the years 1930, 1931, and 1932.

It has been ascertained that the lines observed by Mr. Foden represent a double ditch enclosing a roughly rectangular area of about 2 acres, with rounded corners. Both ditches are "V" shaped. The average measurements of the inner ditch are about 10 feet wide, and 5 feet deep. The outer ditch is somewhat smaller. All trace of the rampart or vallum has disappeared. In the bottom of the ditches was a deposit of black peaty matter, with roots and decayed vegetation. For the most part the ditches had been filled with clean sand or gravel containing an occasional piece of pot or tile. But round the North Western corner they were filled with black soil, and the inner ditch contained an abundance of pottery, building materials, and other debris.

It appears that the ditches were open a sufficient time to allow of the accumulation of 6" to 12" of vegetable matter

and silt, and that they were completely filled up during the Roman period. In no case was any medieval or modern material found in the filling.

On the Eastern side of the inclosure a break occurs in both ditches. A metalled road passes through the break in the outer ditch, but no trace of a roadway was detected through the gap in the inner ditch, and there is at present no explanation why so large a space was left. In ploughing the field, after the conclusion of operations in 1931, a stone lined well was discovered within the inclosure, which was examined in the Autumn of 1932. The Well, when discovered, was completely filled with soil and rubbish. It was found to be 15' 8" deep, lined with stone to a depth of 7". The lower portion was cut in the sandstone rock. We were reluctantly compelled to remove the stone lining, which was unsafe, in order to get to the bottom. But careful drawings have been made, and a number of photographs taken. The contents of the Well included:-

A rectangular block of sandstone 24" X 18" X 16", with a hole 4" square and 3" deep in the middle of the upper side, probably the socket for a wooden post.

A piece of Samian, Form 36 of Antonine date.

Three skulls of Bos longifrons.

Skull of a small horse or pony.

A S of Agrippa struck C. A.D. 37 Obv. Agrippa, head to left Rev. S.C.Neptune.
It came from the very bottom of the Well. Its early date suggests a Well of the First Century, reconditioned in the Third Century or later.

The Well, and the great quantity of pottery and building material found in the ditches suggests that there was a very substantial building in the immediate vicinity from which the debris was derived. But we have not yet succeeded in locating it. The site is still somewhat of a puzzle. It has, so far, afforded slight evidence of First Century occupation, and of a more intensive occupation from the early part of the Second Century, continuing until the Third or Fourth Century.

(for detailed description see page)

Skeuchstone

1932

This season's work commenced on September 5th and continued until September 21st. The filling in and restoration of the surface were completed on October 4th. Our first task was the examination of the well discovered in ploughing the field after the conclusion of operations in 1931.

The well, when discovered, was completely filled with soil and rubbish. It was originally intended to empty it of its contents, but, unfortunately, for the reason explained later, it was found necessary to remove the stone lining. This, however, had its compensation in as much as it led to a discovery which would not have been made if the original plan of merely emptying it of its contents had been adhered to. The depth of the well, when cleared to the bottom, was found to be 15' 8". It was lined to a depth of 7' with blocks of local sandstone. The foundation course consisted of four oblong pieces - two headers and two streachers - laid on the natural rock. These formed a rectangular base 3' square. The upper courses were built on this foundation and formed a polygonal structure. Generally speaking, the stones presented flat or straight faces on the inside, but a few of the larger ones had been

cut with concave faces. The general appearance of the lined portion was round, though in reality it was polygonal. Below the masonry, the well was cut in the sandstone rock. This rock had been eroded by action of the water, and the well at this point was oval in shape, measuring 5' 3" x 3' 10" and narrowing down to a circle 3' in diameter. The bottom of the well was in the form of a small basin hollowed out of the rock.

When the well had been cleared below the footings of the masonry, it was felt, owing to the apparent insecurity of the foundations, that it would be unsafe to proceed with the emptying of the remainder without first removing the stonework. Its removal was, therefore, decided upon as an unfortunate necessity. It disclosed, however, important facts which would not otherwise have come to light. To facilitate the removal of the stones, the soil round the well was excavated to a depth of 7' and the lining was removed course by course. It was found that all the larger stones had been originally rectangular in shape and had formed part of a very substantial building. One of the stones showed two dowell holes on its upper side. All these stones were tooled on the face and

pick dressed on the other sides. All were laid without mortar and, in several cases, even bedding was secured by packings of Roman Pottery. In order to fit the stones for use in the well, the two front corners of each block had been roughly knocked off. In the soil behind the stones at a depth of 6' was a piece of Castor ware from which it is inferred that the lining was not earlier than the Third Century. It was also discovered that, in order to put in the stone lining, the soil round the well had been removed and filled in again. This filling contained, in addition to the piece of Castor ware above referred to, fragments of an amphora and other coarse pottery. It was also observed that two inclined planes or "runways" had been dug for the purpose of lowering stones into position. The principal objects from the well, enumerated in order from surface downwards, were:-

A small glacial boulder.

A rectangular block of sandstone 24" x 18" x 16" with a hole 4" square and 3" deep in the middle of the upper side, probably the socket for a wooden post. The stone was much abrased on the upper side, suggesting wear by feet.

A piece of Samian Form 36 - probably of Antonine date.

Three skulls of Bos longifrons.

Skull of small horse or pony.

AS of Agrippa, struck c. A.D. 37. Obv. Agrippa, head to left, Rev.S.C.Neptune.

For the identification of this coin, the writer is indebted to Mr.Harold Mattingly of the Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum. It came from the very bottom of the well and its early date suggests a well of the First Century, reconditioned in the Third Century or later.

In addition to the work on the well, a number of trenches were cut intersecting the inner and outer ditches on the north side of the enclosure, and a length of the inner ditch was entirely cleared. The filling of the latter consisted of black soil with an abundance of Roman building materials and pottery. It also yielded two pieces of sheet lead, and three roughly moulded cakes of lead, weighing altogether 133 lbs.

The remainder of the time at our disposal was spent in an ineffectual endeavour to locate the site of the building in connection with which the well was used, and from which the debris in the ditch was derived. This site

is still somewhat of a puzzle. It has, so far, afforded slight evidence of first century occupation and of more intensive occupation from the early part of the Second Century continuing until the Third or Fourth Century.

The investigation of the Shenstone site was continued in 1933 and 1936.

Conclusions.

The earthwork is a semi-permanent camp with accommodation for about 500 men. The character of its defences indicates that it was expected to be occupied for some length of time. How long it was in fact occupied, it is impossible to say. No datable pottery or other finds attributable to the period of military occupation have come to light. The ditches on the south side and the southern half of those on the east and west sides appear to have been deliberately filled in within a few years after they were constructed. The filling of the remainder of the ditches was of an entirely different character. These ditches appear to have remained open for a long period. They were filled with black soil containing much pottery and the debris of a building. The pottery is datable from the late first or early second century to the fourth century.

The military occupation, Probably a post established during Ostorius Scapula's advance from the Fosseway, and perhaps maintained for a time to guard communications.

Subsequent occupation. After the withdrawal of the military, it seems probable that the site remained vacant for a time, but the evidence of the pottery proves that it was in civil occupation from the beginning of the 2nd, cent. or perhaps a little earlier, and that this occupation contin

until the 4th. century. There was a substantial building in the immediate vicinity the site of which could not be located - probably a villa or farmhouse. The building ceased to be inhabited sometime in the 4th century, but how or when it was destroyed is not known.