

CHAPTER V

Traces of Successive Occupations

Records of Change

ON many of the Roman sites which have been excavated, both in this country and on the continent, we find evidences of changes and alterations—traces of successive occupations. Forts rapidly constructed to hold an expeditionary force were strengthened as settlement became more permanent. New methods of fortification gave place to old. Increased garrisons made enlargement necessary. These were among the more obvious causes of the phenomena that have been observed. Abroad, for example, the various occupations brought to light at the Saalburg, at Kapersburg, and at Zugmantel have been already noted. The changes which have been revealed in these cases through the recovery of the ground plans, have in others been commemorated by inscriptions. Thus, an inscription from Dacia of the year A.D. 140 tells of an addition to the size and strength of a fort which had become too small for its garrison.¹ The inscription telling of the restoration of the walls of a fort from Bumbesti in Wallachia has already been cited.²

Again, in England on the line of the great road leading from the Wall of Hadrian into Scotland, we have evidence of restorations of older work both at Bremenium and at Habitancium. At Bremenium a cohort of the Varduli commemorate the entire reconstruction of a *ballistarium*.³ At Habitancium a tablet in honour of the Emperor Septimus Severus and his sons Caracalla and Geta celebrates the rebuilding of the gate with the walls. '*Portam cum muris vetustate dilapsis a solo restituit*.'⁴ Lastly, in Scotland the excavation of Birrens brought to light beneath the buildings

1 IMP. CAES. TITO AELIO HADRIANO ANTONINO. AUG. PIO. TRIB. POT. III. COS. XII. CASTRA N. BURG(ARIORUM) ET VERED(ARIORUM) QUOD ANGUSTE TENDERET DUPLICATO VALLI PEDE ET IMPOSITIS TURRIBUS AMPLIAVIT PER AQUILAM FIDUM PROC. AUG. *C.I.L.* iii. 13796.

2 See *supra*, p. 28, footnote 2.

3 Bruce, *The Roman Wall*, p. 322; *C.I.L.* Vii. 1045.

4 *Ibid.* p. 336; *C.I.L.* vii. 1003.

actually planned, some traces of still older erections, while at Bar Hill a fort apparently of the Agricolan period lay beneath the fort of the Antonine age. Unfortunately at Camelon the different occupations have not been accurately defined. But both there and at Ardoch it was quite evident that there had been more than one.

So it had been also at Newstead, and, as the work of excavation progressed, it became possible to estimate the nature of the alterations which had from time to time been made on the original plan. From modifications of buildings, fillings of ditches, changes of levels, the story of the different phases through which the fort had passed was gradually unfolded. It will be convenient, even at the risk of some repetition of facts already stated, to bring together this evidence in the order of its discovery.

Evidence of two or more Occupations

Before the digging had proceeded very far, it became apparent that at least two occupations had to be dealt with. The foundations of the long buildings in the Retentura were clearly lying on disturbed soil. This gave the first indication, and the discovery of the ditch of the early fort passing beneath the clay rampart of the later occupations, and having at one point the drain of a later period built into it, provided ample confirmation. But it was not until the central buildings came to be investigated that alterations were observed which pointed to three and possibly four separate reconstructions, each of which suggested a distinct period of occupation. Finally the alterations on the earlier gateway of the later fort on the south supplied the evidence of probably a fifth period. The alterations in the buildings were most plainly marked in the Principia. The large hall which had been thrown over the Via Principalis was undoubtedly later than the outer courtyard to which it was attached. The walls of both were founded on cobbles, but at the point of junction on the north side, the cobbles of the west wall of the hall stood on a level with the top of the scarcement of the north wall of the Principia. Again, at the end of the inner courtyard the treasure vault in the Sacellum proved to have been no part of the original chamber. Its walls were built of old material, and were not in alignment with the walls of the Sacellum itself. Its foundations were lower than those of the room in which it stood, and in laying them the cobble foundations of the main walls had been exposed. The method of putting down these foundations by cutting a trench and filling it with river cobbles has already been explained. To remove the side of one of them was to weaken it, and it hardly seems possible that

in erecting two walls side by side contemporaneously, such capable builders as the Romans would thus have left one of the bases uncovered, especially in view of the small difference in level. In the clay of the floor, too, were relics of an older period. Moreover, as we have already seen, such vaults have been noted as later additions at Butzbach in Germany and at Brough in England. Once more, the wall dividing the outer from the inner court lay on disturbed soil, and considerably higher than the foundation of the row of pillars to the west. In the outer court the pillars on the south side showed signs of alteration.

It seemed quite plain that we had here two occupations, in both of which the building had had its principal entrance from the same main street on the east. But the early system of ditches could not belong to either of these occupations. Not only did the ramparts of the later occupations lie over them, but the barrack buildings on the east were actually built above them. The south gate of the early fort lay almost at the end of the later *Via Quintana*, the street which, running parallel to the *Via Principalis*, crossed the fort immediately to the west of the *Principia*.

Four Occupations

We were thus in possession of proof of three occupations. So far, however, no evidence was forthcoming to show why, in enlarging the position of the fort, the early entrance to the south had been abandoned, and the line of the *Via Principalis* moved further to the east. The first definite indication of four occupations was obtained in the excavation of the gates on the south side. At the end of the *Via Principalis* it was found that the ditches had been filled up with river stones to allow the road to pass over them. In the large ditch immediately in front of the wall, which was undoubtedly later than the first occupation, nine feet of black silt lay below the cobbles. It was clear from this that at an earlier period the ditch at this point must have been open, and that either it must have been crossed by a drawbridge, or there must have existed elsewhere another entrance, which had subsequently been superseded by the road, to carry which the ditch had been filled up. As the *Via Principalis* of the plan had clearly been used during two occupations, its continuation crossing the ditches at this point, the earlier entrance (if it existed) must have marked an occupation intervening between the oldest occupation of all, with its peculiar gateways, and the two later ones. It must have been an occupation during which a great strengthening of the defences had taken place, and during which the road doubtless passed out on solid ground.

Careful search revealed no trace of a drawbridge, but an examination of the ground at the south end of the Via Quintana brought to light the heavy bottoming of a road crossing the early ditch and passing beneath the rampart, to disappear again where it was cut by the later ditches. Here, then, was the position of the earlier gateway we had been in search of. It was, indeed, natural that it should be so, as the main road from the south in the earliest occupation had entered almost at this point. The disappearance of the road on the line of the later ditches proved that, with the formation of the gate at the end of the Via Principalis, this gate had

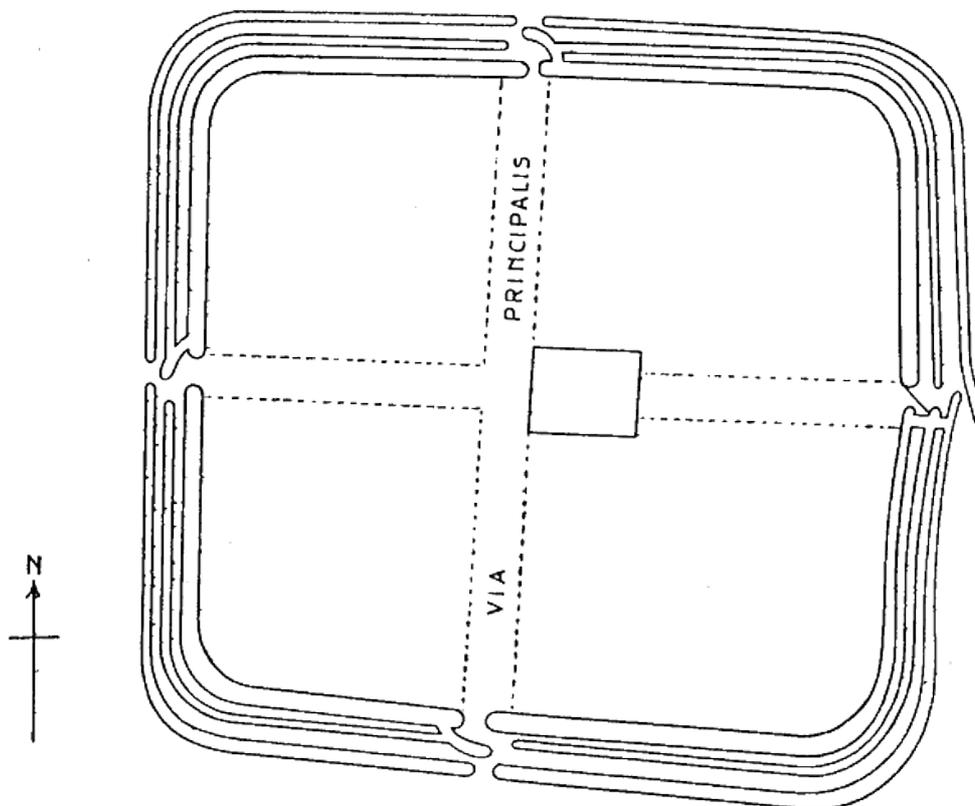


FIG. 3. PLAN OF THE LATER FORT IN ITS FIRST PERIOD.

The position of the openings in the outer ditch opposite the north, south, and west gates can only be inferred.

been closed and the ditches carried through the roadway. The position of the earlier gate was further confirmed by an examination of the double ditches surrounding the annexe to the south. Here the road from the Via Quintana passed out on solid ground, the ditches stopping on either side of it, while the road from the Via Principalis was carried over ditches which had been filled up for the purpose with river stones. It was thus apparent

that after the abandonment of the Agricolan fort there came a second occupation, during which the Via Principalis ran on the line of the later Via Quintana.

As we have seen, the ground plan of a Roman fort was laid out on certain well-recognised lines. In every rectangular fort of the type of Newstead there were at least four gates, one on each side. The position of these gates governed the position of the buildings in the interior. The Principia was placed as near as possible to the centre. It stood midway between the two end gates, facing one of them. The road traversing the fort between the two remaining gates passed in front of it.¹ Now if we apply this rule to the second occupation at Newstead, the line then taken by the road traversing the fort from north to south makes it practically certain that the Principia, if it occupied the usual position, must have faced the west, following no doubt in this the position of the corresponding building of the Agricolan occupation.

The strong buttressed building, lying immediately to the south of the Principia, showed evidence that it had faced the west. It was a well-built structure, exhibiting no marks of reconstruction. Its loading platform was placed at the west end. The level of the roads at either end seemed to have risen against it, indicating that it belonged to an early period. It cannot, however, have been associated with the oldest occupation of all, as a pit lay underneath the foundations of the east wall, while the walls of a large building were found to pass below it. These walls correspond in alignment and in method of construction with the early walls lying at the east end of the Principia. The latter enclosed a space projecting from the east end of the Principia into the Via Principalis, and they had been cut through in laying the cobble foundations of the Principia wall. The conclusion suggested was that they belonged to the first occupation of the fort, the Principia of which faced west; that the south buttressed building belonged to the second, or possibly third, occupation, and, with the contemporary Principia, had faced west, but that in the two latest occupations the Principia had been turned round, probably without any alteration of the foundations of its main walls.

1 A seeming exception to this rule occurs in the fort at South Shields, but there is reason to suppose that there the peculiar position of the Principia is the result of an enlargement of the fort, in which the gates had been altered and the building left in its old position. Bosanquet, 'The Roman Camp at Housesteads,' *Archaeologia Aeliana*, vol. xxv. p. 244.

Nothing had as yet emerged to furnish an explanation of the changes in the ground plan that have just been indicated. The reason, however, became clear when in 1907, in tracing the walls of the barrack blocks in the Retentura, there came to light the foundations of the heavy wall, six feet in width, crossing the fort from north to south parallel to, and about seventy feet from the west side of; the Via Quintana, which has already been referred to as the reducing wall. It had a gateway flanked by guard chambers at the point where it crossed the main road that ran from east to west. The new wall had evidently been erected in order to reduce the size of the fort.

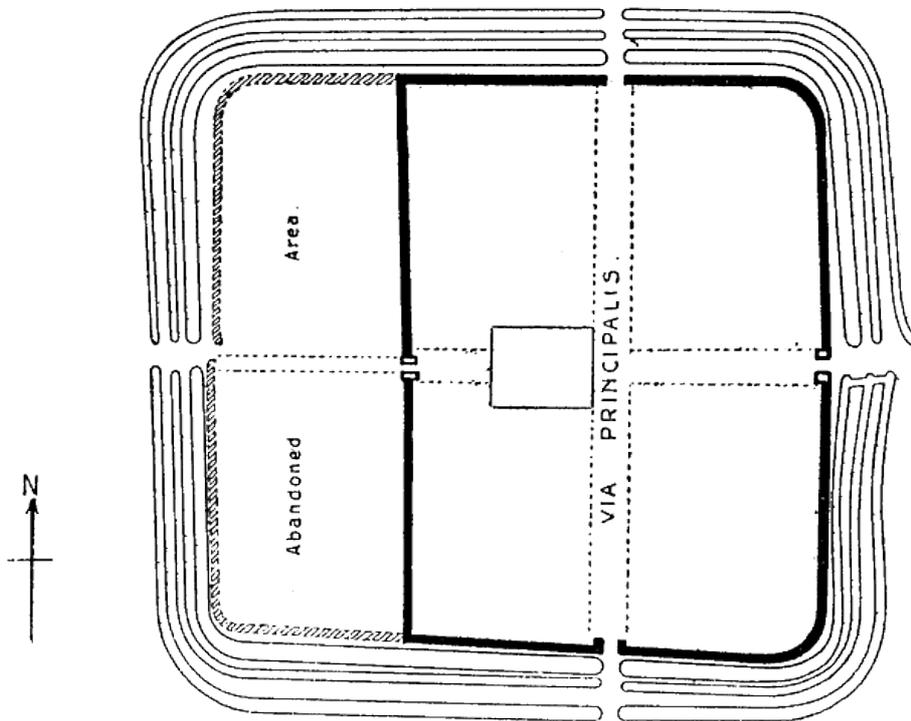


FIG. 4. PLAN OF THE REDUCED FORT

The Reduction in Size

The area cut off comprises the lowest and wettest portion, and the black, peaty matter, which lies over it, would suggest that at one time it had been flooded. In extent it measures about one-third of the whole space originally enclosed, and its abandonment would appear to indicate a definite period of occupation. With the reduction in the size of the fort the existing lines of road ceased to be in accordance with the recognised plan. The street which served as the earlier Via Principalis no longer formed the central artery of communication, and the Principia, if left facing the west,

would have had its entrance close to the new western gate, and would not have been in its proper central position. The north and south gates, and with them the line of the Via Principalis, were accordingly moved further towards the east, and we may safely infer that with this change of gates the Principia underwent alteration and was turned round. In its reduced form, the interior plan of the fort, with its comparatively small Retentura, must have resembled that of Wiesbaden.

As already noted, the alterations within the Principia had convinced us that the building had faced the east during two separate occupations. The facts ascertained regarding the wall reducing the size of the fort gave further confirmation to this opinion, because clearly the period of the construction of the reducing wall, which must have necessitated the turning round of the Principia, was followed by a period in which the wall was removed. Not only were its gate towers buried beneath the gravel road of the final occupation, but the wall itself had been utilised for the foundation of the front wall of Block XX, while buildings and drains of later construction lay in the area which had formerly been abandoned. In fact, the change in the direction of the Principia, at first adopted through pressure of necessity to suit the altered size of the fort, was continued when the fort was again enlarged. This was probably due to a natural desire to simplify building operations, for the method of foundation employed in the later occupation lent itself readily to reconstruction on the old lines. The trench carried down to the subsoil, with its large river stones laid in puddled clay, formed a base indestructible by fire or weather, and so long as the outline and size of the building remained the same, the foundation might be used for several successive rebuildings.

Unfortunately at Newstead the demolition had been so complete that with a single exception doorways were entirely obliterated, and with them many details which would have rendered it more easy to follow the various reconstructions. But certain points were clear. The north buttressed building showed evidence of rebuilding on an old foundation. Heavy blocks of river stone embedded in clay served to support inferior masonry in which were a broken quern stone of Niedermendig lava, bricks, and other old material. It was interesting to compare this with the remains of the south buttressed building in which, although the foundations were the same, the superstructure was of well-built hammer-dressed sandstone. No doubt the size and number of those storehouse buildings were always proportionate to the extent of the garrison. Consequently, with the abandonment of the original Praetentura one

would suffice. It is probable that both were erected in the second, or possibly third, occupation, but that with the restriction of area marked by the erection of the reducing wall, the northern building was dismantled, to be again rebuilt when the size of the fort was once more increased. It is easy to understand why the south building should have been selected for retention. It would lie nearer to cultivated ground, and to the highway that linked the garrison to civilisation and to Rome.

Abandonment of the Clavicula-shaped Ditches

In dealing with the excavation of a large area, particularly under pressure of a consciousness that ploughing or sowing await the filling in of long open trenches, it is only too easy to pass over slight indications which may lead to the discovery of valuable pieces of information; and thus two important traces of change were only discovered towards the end of the digging. At the west gate of the fort an arm of the great ditch, in outline resembling an everted clavicula, had been, as already mentioned, thrown across so as to cover it. It was apparent that before the final abandonment of the fort this arm had been filled in, for the strong cobble foundations of a road were found to be carried across it. The pottery which it yielded was all of an early type. It thus looks as if the second period of the occupation of Newstead had taken place at a relatively early date, one not far removed from the invasion of Agricola, while the entire absence of later pottery suggests that the overlapping ditch had not been open for any great length of time. No similar ditch was found in front of the east gate, but then the gateway was covered by the prolongation of the outer ditches overlapping one another. It had also the further defence of the looping together of the ditches on the south side of the road and the diagonal palisade drawn across the entrance. The same form of defence observed on the west was, however, found in front both of the north gate and of the south gate, and here also it had been filled up, and was crossed by the road entering at the south end of the later Via Quintana, the original Via Principalis. The earlier gate of the south annex was similarly protected. We have thus evidence that before the reduction in the size of the fort the fortifications of the second period underwent an important alteration inasmuch as the overlapping ditches in front of the north, south, and west gates were filled up. The traces of the road in front of the east gate were too slight to make it possible to prove that at the same time the ends of the ditches overlapping the gate were filled up and the palisade across the roadway abandoned, but it is probable

that such was the case. While it is possible that this only means that some strengthening of the defences had rendered these ditches unnecessary, it is more probable that it indicates yet another distinct occupation. Generally speaking, such devices of fortification as the *titulus* and the *clavicula* appear to be characteristic of the forts with earthen ramparts. In the stone-walled forts with stronger gateways they must have ceased to be employed, and the natural inference is that the abandonment of these *clavicula*-shaped ditches, which took place at a comparatively early period, coincided with the erection of the surrounding wall. This is the more likely as we find that in the reduction of the size of the fort in the succeeding period the new defence on the west consisted of a wall. It is improbable that this wall would have been erected had the rest of the defences consisted simply of earthworks.

The second sign of change discovered towards the close of the operations was as follows. The barrack blocks in the *Praetentura* were traced out in the winter of 1906–7, and in the succeeding autumn two trenches were cut across the area from north to south, in the hope of finding earlier foundations. But it was not till the spring of 1968 that, during the investigation of the ditch of the early fort, the heavy foundations of a large building were discovered at the south-east angle of the fort, lying beneath the later barrack blocks. They could not have belonged to the first period, as they were carried over the ditch of the early fort, and it is therefore probable that they must be assigned to the second period.

The Phases of Occupation

It will be convenient to summarise the several phases of occupation thus indicated. *First*, there was erected a fort of somewhat irregular form with an earthen rampart, and having its gateways at right angles to the line of its ramparts. *Second*, this was succeeded by a fort more regular in form and somewhat larger in area, defended by a rampart and triple ditches, *clavicula*-shaped or overlapping ditches, being cut in front of at least three of the gates. *Third*, we have the same fort, but with these overlapping ditches filled up. It is probable that this phase of the occupation was accompanied by the building of the wall. *Fourth*, there came an occupation marked by a reduction in the size of the fort, and by the construction of the wall parallel to the *Via Quintana*. And *Fifth*, we find a return to the area of the second and third occupations.