Fig 1 — Map: THE ROMAN EAST MIDLANDS

KEY TO PLAN OF MILITARY SITES IN THE EAST MIDLANDS

1. Winteringham 10. Thorpe
2. Littleborough 11. Ancaster
3. Newton-on-Trent 12. Marglioton
4. Lincoln 13. Arnold
8. Brough 17. Sawley
19. Great Casterton
20. Longthorpe
21. Water Newton
22. Leicester
23. Ratby
24. Market Bosworth
25. Mancester
26. High Cross
27. Caves Inn
28. Wigston Parva
THE EARLY MILITARY HISTORY OF
THE ROMAN EAST MIDLANDS

by

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During the past decade our knowledge of Roman military activity in the East Midlands has increased considerably and this paper is an attempt to bring together new information and that already published. It is divided into four sections:

I  The Conquest and Development of the Fosse Frontier
II  Military Sites Along the Northern Section of the Fosse Way
III  Military Sites in Advance of the Northern Section of the Fosse Way
IV  Military Sites to the Rear of the Fosse Way in the East Midlands

I
THE CONQUEST AND DEVELOPMENT
OF THE FOSSE FRONTIER

The biography of Suetonius allows the movements of Vespasian and the II Augusta to be traced in outline across the south and west of Britain, but lack of historical references and archaeological evidence makes the history of the first few years of the conquest in the Midlands difficult to follow with precision. In general, it was earlier believed that, in the pattern of events after the capture of Camulodunum, the II Augusta turned its attentions to the south and west, while the IX Hispana advanced north and established a base at Lincoln, leaving the XIV Gemina and the XX Valeria to move north-west across the country eventually creating the Fosse frontier. Evidence is now coming to light to suggest that this is a much oversimplified view of the events immediately after the conquest. Even allowing for the new evidence, it is still difficult to be sure, whether the military sites now being found in the area are connected with the conquest period or with later activities. At any rate there is now an awareness that more military sites are likely to be found, that they may be connected with the initial advance across the country, and that this advance can no longer be considered in terms of one quick movement. It is, for example, doubted whether the IX Hispana established a fortress at Lincoln as early as was once believed, and it is more probable that it was founded in the fifties or even as late as A.D. 60. Similarly the claims for an early legionary fortress at Wroxeter are not altogether convincing. It now seems clear that two, or possibly three, legions were active in the central part of England before establishing permanent quarters. The XX Valeria remained based at Colchester during the first few years of occupation, and from there would
be able to reach out into the Midlands or into the Fens if required, and also be able to guard the lines of communications with the early ports. The legion left Colchester in A.D. 49. The IX Hispana presumably advanced north, in view of its ultimate appearance at Lincoln, and was responsible for the construction of Ermine Street and the forts along it. Several of these are now known, but it is still doubtful whether all can be definitely dated to this early period, for there are other episodes to which such military sites may belong, e.g., the rebellion of Boudicca.

As to the Fosse itself, much has been written since R. G. Collingwood suggested that it was a frontier-line. He was, first of all, struck by the degree of straightness of the road and, despite the absence of certain sections of the road in the Antonine Itinerary, was convinced that it was built in its entirety at an early date. He concluded that the Fosse had originally a definite purpose to fulfil which no longer existed in the second century. In searching for this purpose he discussed at some length the meaning of the passage in Tacitus Annals, and supported Bradley’s emendation of 1883. The aim of Collingwood’s paper was to support a suggestion of Furneaux that the Severn, Avon and Trent formed the frontier and that the Fosse Way acted as a lateral line of communication. To support this Collingwood listed the sites along the Fosse Way which had produced archaeological evidence, namely Margidunum, Leicester and Lincoln. He also gave a list of finds from behind the Fosse to be associated with the first years of the conquest, namely the tiles from Hilly Wood (IX Hispana) and from Whittlebury (XX Valeria.) Further consideration was given to the lead pigs from the Mendips and also the II Augusta tile from Seaton. Collingwood’s view was that the Fosse formed a frontier during the time of Ostorius Scapula, and that later, when the II Augusta was moved to Caerleon and the IX Hispana to York, the road ceased to have any function other than for local traffic, except for short sections which featured on main routes, and so appeared on the Itinerary.

The next major contribution to our understanding of the problems of the Fosse Way came in 1938 in a paper by T. Davies Pryce, in which he concluded that the southern sector of the Fosse, between Exeter and Leicester, represented the unfinished work of Aulus Plautius, and that the northern sector, between Leicester and Lincoln, was completed by Scapula. The reason for this suggestion was the lack of early material on the northern sector. He also concluded that Vespasian’s advance had been fairly rapid, since the Mendips had been worked for lead as early as A.D. 49, and since the finds from Hod Hill, Seaton and Exeter were equally early. Thus there was no doubt in Pryce’s mind that the southern part of the Fosse belonged to the period when Plautius was in command. Pryce also accepted Bradley’s interpretation of the Annals, and attempted to show that Tacitus had implied that the new frontier of Scapula included the rivers Trent and Severn, for which the northern part of the Fosse Way would have been a necessity. “The Fosse was constructed”, Pryce concluded, “either in its entirety by Aulus Plautius or, as seems more probable, in part by this governor and completed by Ostorius Scapula”, who “obtained control of all the land on this side of the Trent and Severn, and established a new
frontier conterminous with these rivers”. Here we have the first suggestion of two phases in the Fosse frontier system.

Dr. Graham Webster in 1960 took Pryce’s ideas further and, having first attributed the building of the Fosse in its entirety to Plautius, then went on show that the passage in the *Annals* referred to Scapula’s activities in an area bounded on the west by the Severn and on the north by the Trent in its upper reaches, i.e. “a considerable wedge of the Midlands”. Webster also suggests that the Fosse Way frontier was not a single line, but that the road occupied a medial position in a defensive zone of forts, these forts being in front of and behind, as well as on the Fosse itself. This means that the Fosse Way can no longer be considered as the actual frontier, but as a lateral line of communication in a broad frontier zone, a view not far removed from that put forward by Furneaux some seventy years earlier. There has been a considerable increase in the amount of material that has come to light in the intervening period, and Webster reviews it in great detail. This adds weight to the theories put forward. There can now be little doubt that these views of the Fosse are most probably correct, and it is the purpose of this work to review and list together all the known military sites in the East Midlands.

On the northern sector of the Fosse Way evidence of military occupation has been found at Leicester, *Margidunum*, Thorpe, possibly Brough and Lincoln (see map of sites *fig. 1*). These sites are dealt with in more detail later but, as already stressed, the problems of precise dating make it very difficult, if not impossible, to try to distinguish between the work of Plautius from that of Scapula. A number of new sites in front of, and to the rear of, the Fosse will also be discussed. If then the frontier-zone theory is accepted, most of these sites in the East Midlands could be expected to have been established soon after the conquest, and when excavated, should tell us more about the troops stationed in the Midlands and their movements. The apparent large number of forts of less than cohort size would seem to indicate that the army was more than fully extended at this time, but again it must be remembered that detachments of the army would have been active in the area certainly until the resumption of the advance northwards by Cerialis, if not later. Caution is required; not every military structure need be attributed to the invasion period.

II

MILITARY SITES ALONG THE NORTHERN SECTION OF THE FOSSE WAY

**HIGH CROSS — Venonae (SP 4788)**

Watling Street and the Fosse Way were laid out primarily as part of the lines of communication for the army. Some form of military settlement at the junction of the two, namely at High Cross, might, therefore, be expected. No signs of a fort have so far appeared in any of the excavations, and the pottery found is considered not to be earlier than *c. A.D. 70*. In 1955 and 1967 the Fosse Way was sectioned close to its junction with Watling Street and found to have a *terminus post quem* of the Flavian-
Trajanic period, which might suggest an earlier version of the Fosse on a different alignment, such as is found north of *Margidunum*. The earliest find would appear to be a coin of Caligula.16

**LEICESTER — Ratae Coritanorum (SK 5804)**

It has been suggested that the earthworks at Ratby (see below, pp. 10-11) are those of a Roman fort and that the site of Leicester grew out of an earlier pre-Roman Belgic settlement.17 It is still not clear whether a Belgic settlement did in fact exist. No Belgic pottery has yet been found in layers that can conclusively be shown to be earlier than the conquest, e.g. in layers sealed by a fort occupation.18 The pottery may have been brought to the site during the early years of the invasion; it stands comparison with the pottery from *Margidunum*19 and Great Casterton20 both of which were military foundations. In contrast Thorpe has below the fort rampart,21 two periods of house, which may be Belgic. Evidence is now coming to light to confirm the long-held belief that Leicester was an early military site. Previously the idea was based on a number of military objects found including a legionary bronze belt plate.22

Haverfield claimed23 that the tile inscribed LVIII retrograde must show that a draft of the *VIII Augusta* served in Britain at the time of the conquest, and was for a while stationed at Leicester. Although it must be admitted that there is slight evidence for the presence of this legion, or a vexillation from it, in Britain in A.D. 43, it is by no means certain that it stayed for any length of time, and it is most unlikely that it had the opportunity of making permanent quarters necessitating the use of tiles. How then can the presence of the LVIII tile in Leicester be explained? It has been suggested that the die for making the stamp was broken, and that it should have read LVIII. A close examination of the Leicester stamp does not confirm this suggestion, as there is no indication of a break and it is unlikely that a member of the *IX Hispana* would use a broken die, which because of its break could refer to another legion.

If the tile is a genuine legionary tile, when can it have been produced? There are several indications of the presence of the *VIII Augusta* (or a detachment of it) in Britain. Some believe the legion accompanied Claudius to Britain, but this is open to question.24 An inscription also tells us that men from this legion were included in reinforcements sent to Britain during the first half of the second century.25 Two further pieces of evidence concerning the presence of the *VIII Augusta* are known, but they do not help to date their activities in Britain, except that neither of them could be connected with the Claudian conquest. The first is the bronze shield-boss found in the River Tyne,26 bearing the punched inscription *LEG VIII AVG*, which it is tempting to link with reinforcements landing on the Tyne direct from Germany during troop movements of the early second century. The second is the inscription found in the eighteenth century, either from Brougham or Kirkby Thore,27 which again records the presence of this legion in Britain, but there is nothing to suggest a date. There is little doubt that a detachment of the *VIII Augusta* served in Britain most probably during the first half of the second century, and that it is to this
(a) Crop marks at Wigston Parva, Leicestershire

(b) Earthworks at Ratby, Leicestershire
(a) Earthworks at Sawley, Derbyshire

(b) Crop marks of a Roman marching camp at Holme, Nottinghamshire
Crop marks of a Roman marching camp at Holme, Nottinghamshire
period that the above-mentioned objects, including the Leicester tile stamp, must belong.

From excavations in Leicester there is some indication of the presence of a fort or fortress. When in 1958, J. S. Wacher sectioned the north defences, beneath the rampart of the town wall were found large post holes and foundation trenches associated with Neronian samian, and reminiscent of those found on military sites. During excavations of the forum in 1965 by Miss J. Mellor, a number of layers were found at low levels which resembled material found on military sites. This was the sum total of our knowledge of the military occupation of Leicester until the summer of 1967, when excavations outside the supposed site of the west gate of Ratae revealed a 40-ft. length of a V-shaped ditch with cleaning channel. This would seem to be the first concrete proof of the existence of military fortifications at Leicester. It now remains to be seen what area it covered, when it was constructed, and whether it was a permanent fort or fortress or a marching camp.

A study of the road system around Leicester may also help to throw light on the military history of the town, for it is clear that Leicester held a strategic position in the advance of the Roman army across the Midlands. After the capture of Camulodunum the movement of the troops is not all that clear but, as already mentioned, the XX Augusta and the XIV Gemina, or more likely just the XIV Gemina, moved across the central part of Britain to the frontier zone. Their line of communication with Colchester is reflected in the road through Cambridge, Godmanchester, Medbourne, sometimes known as the Via Devana (Gartree Road). This road heads for Leicester in the frontier zone, and as this was a line of consolidation it might suggest that Leicester was not just a small military site, but perhaps a fortress. The behaviour of the road from Leicester to Mancetter may also have some bearing on the matter, as it is now believed to have been laid out at an early date to link two military sites. The fact that the road does not aim at the town of Manduesedum can best be explained by assuming that it was aligned on the earlier fort which is believed to lie in the village of Mancetter, half a mile west of the later civil settlement. If this was so, then it means that the road was laid out by the army at an early date, which in turn supports the case for a fort at Leicester. What more natural than to link an important military centre with the main highway leading into territory that was now the scene of military activity? The evidence, therefore, seems to indicate the presence of an army detachment at Leicester, holding, perhaps, a key position in the strategy of the conquest. There would be quick communication both with the north and south-west along the Fosse Way, with Colchester along the Gartree Road, and with the forward movements of the army along Watling Street by means of the Mancetter road.

**Willoughby — Vernemetum (SK 6425)**

The civil settlement on this site is recorded in the *Antonine Itinerary* and in view of an increasing number of sites showing a military origin, it is possible that a fort might have preceded it at Willoughby, especially as the
site lies in the Fosse frontier zone. The excavations of 1948 have never been published in full, but the excavator says that stratified finds on the site are as early as Claudian. Mr. B. R. Hartley, who looked at some of the samian came to the conclusion that it was all mid-second century or later.33

*Margidumum* (SK 7041)

The site has been extensively excavated by Dr. Felix Oswald, and some of the results have been published, mainly by the University of Nottingham. Most of the work was done during the early half of this century, and from the reports it is difficult to understand clearly all the stratification on the site. In particular the obviously complicated sequence of defences are incomprehensible. Oswald interpreted the site as that of a fort of early date,34 and also claimed to have found the *praetorium*.35 Neither of these claims can now be substantiated, although it must be admitted that military objects have been found on the site, along with a large quantity of early pottery; indicating that a fort should exist somewhere in the area. The defences, which Oswald claims are those of the fort, do not follow the conventional lines of the known examples of this date, and Malcolm Todd has further shown that the fortifications, postulated by Oswald as the earliest ones, are second century in date.36 Similarly no one would expect to find a stone *praetorium* in a fort dated to the opening years of the conquest. Oswald found a considerable amount of iron slag associated with the early pottery,37 and this might well have come from military iron workers with their workshops in an annexe adjacent to the fort so as to reduce the fire risk. It seems likely that the site was an early works depot supplying the army in the Midlands. The nearest ironstone is in the region of Belvoir, nine miles south-east of *Margidumum*, and there is a suggestion of a road linking the two areas. Roman finds are known from the ironstone area at Knipson,38 Eaton39 and Goadby Marwood,40 but none of these have produced early finds. Although most of the material belongs to the third or fourth century, Goadby Marwood has produced some early-second-century pottery and also a carinated bowl which may be first century.41 *Margidumum*’s importance at this period may then be due to the proximity of easily-worked ironstone. Todd has also shown, in his recent excavations, that the earliest levels on the site were characterised by enormous quantities of iron waste and slag, and that these levels were associated with a mid-to-late first-century timber building.42 No smelting furnaces were found.

Excavations in 1967 to the north of the town defences and west of the Fosse Way found two ditches of first-century date. The larger of the two was nine-feet wide and six-feet deep, V-shaped and with a cleaning channel at the bottom. The ditch had silted up naturally, and contained large quantities of Flavian and pre-Flavian pottery. A subsequent examination of the samian suggests that the earliest levels at *Margidumum* are not earlier than c. a.d. 55/60. Just short of the Fosse Way the ditch ended, presumably at the causeway in front of a gate to the fort.43 From the small section cut in 1967 it is believed that this is the south gate, and that the fort lies entirely to the north of the later town. If this is a gate on the
Fosse, then we must infer an early date for the road, which is contrary to Oswald’s Hadrianic date and also raises problems concerning the early version of the Fosse recently established by Todd.44

**Thorpe — Ad Pontem (SK 7550)**

Aerial photographs taken over a number of years by Dr. J. K. St. Joseph have identified several enclosures in two adjacent fields. Attempts to classify these have led to much misinterpretation, such as the suggestion that the polygonal-shaped enclosure in Oddhouse Close to the north constituted the defences of the town, whilst those in Wharf Close belonged to the fort.46 The pattern of defences is complicated and different from that postulated. There certainly was part of a fort in Wharf Close, but it was not enclosed by the ditches showing most clearly from the air, which belonged to the civil settlement. The fort defences consisted of a double ditch-system with 70 feet between the two ditches. Little of the rampart survived, but sufficient to show its existence. The ditches had the typical military cleaning channel at the bottom.47 On investigating that polygonal-shaped enclosure in Oddhouse Close it was found that the main ditch was again a typical military ditch, V-shaped with a cleaning channel and with traces of “clayed-up” sides.48 The lower silt from this ditch contained pottery of Flavian date, indicating that the ditch was of early date, probably belonging to the military occupation of the site, and must surely have been a large annexe or stores’ compound, with apparently only a few buildings inside. Excavation in Oddhouse Close revealed the ditches on the north-east side of the fort, giving its dimensions on the north-east south-west side as 250 feet over the ramparts. Probable changes in the course of the Trent since Roman times make it difficult to estimate the length of the other side, but the area of the fort would be in the region of two acres.

The excavations carried out by R. R. Inskeep in 195249 do not throw any light on the problems under discussion, and much of his report, although not published until 1965, does not benefit from the work done in 1963 and 1965. In his paper Inskeep interprets the fort ditches as a wide roadway,50 and claims to have sectioned the north-west side of the civil defences. Similarly the work done by A. Oswald in 1937–851 does not help with the military problems of the site. His work was concentrated in two fields named Big and Little Oddhouse Closes (the hedge between has since been moved, and the field is now known as Oddhouse Close). Oswald was aware that the site might have been of military origin, and from the chance finds he suggested that Mill Field and East Stoke village were the site of the fort, while the fields that he excavated were of the latter civil settlement. This conclusion was based on the fact that the coins found in the area showed a division between first-and second-century coins from Mill Field and the village, and third-and fourth-century coins from Big and Little Oddhouse Closes. From Oswald’s excavation he concluded that the first phase of building was of timber and dated to A.D. 60–80, and it is likely that these were connected with the annexe, already mentioned, which was probably in use down to A.D. 60–70. Some of the pottery illustrated by Oswald would seem to be of Claudian date and similar to that found on other military sites in the Midlands.
NEWARK (SK 7953)
There are in the Newark Museum a number of finds of early date, suggesting the possibility of a military site.\(^5\) The pottery comes from a Roman cemetery in the Northgate area.\(^3\) It seems likely that the Trent played an important part in communications during the Fosse-frontier period, and it is at Newark that the Fosse and Trent run very close to each other for 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) miles. Newark is, in fact, the first convenient place for supplies to be landed from the Trent where they could be easily distributed along the existing road network. On the other hand the presence of the fort and large annexe at Thorpe might suggest that it was there, rather than at Newark, that supplies for the Roman army were transferred from water to land.

BROUGH — Crococalana (SK 8358)
The evidence of military occupation at Brough is very slender, and rests solely on the decorated bronze cheek-piece of an auxiliary parade helmet.\(^4\) Recent aerial photographs by Dr. J. K. St. Joseph\(^5\) have revealed a maze of pits and ditches, none of which can be definitely associated with a military structure. The only excavations to be carried out were by T. C. S. Woolley as far back as 1905, and in the brief report\(^6\) no plans of buildings are included, though there are photographs of some pottery and small finds. The coin list only goes back to Domitian. Since these investigations by Woolley the only advance in our knowledge of this site has come from aerial photographs. Experience has shown that too rapid interpretation of these can often, as at Thorpe, lead to mistakes. It would, therefore, be unwise to be dogmatic about the two broad ditches that can be seen from the air, except to draw attention to the possibility that the inner ditch could be made up of two narrower ditches,\(^7\) and that there might be another ditch, the corner of which can just be seen to the east of the inner broad ditch. When considering the possible siting of a fort at Brough it is worth remembering that at Holme, only two miles to the west, a large marching camp has been found,\(^8\) which will be discussed in more detail below.

LINCOLN — Lindum (SK 9771)
The existence of a legionary fortress at Lincoln has been known for many years, and it has been assumed that it was founded within a few years of the Claudian invasion. Dr. G. Webster has listed much of the material,\(^9\) and little doubt had been cast upon the suggestion of an early date until B. R. Hartley commented upon the absence of early Claudian samian, which would be expected on a site founded soon after the conquest.\(^10\) Dr. Webster also remarked, in 1949, that: “it is remarkable that only a few fragments of samian ware can be definitely assigned to the legionary period”.\(^11\) Hartley suggests that the foundation of Lincoln may not have been until the reorganisation of the fifties; Frere, on the other hand, favours a later date and feels that c. A.D. 60 may be nearer the truth.\(^12\)

Excavations have not produced any material which definitely presses for an early date, except for a number of locally issued Claudian coins.
The whole question of Claudian copies of official issues has been discussed by Sutherland, most recently in the report Camulodunum, but it is clear that the presence of imitation coins need not indicate a military occupation of a site in the first few years of the conquest, unless there is other evidence to support one.

If it is accepted that the fortress was not established until the late fifties, then the question must be asked, where the IX Hispana was based until that date. Evidence is now coming to light which suggests that, after the capture of Camulodunum, fighting forces of less than legionary strength were employed to subdue the lowland zone of England. These vexillations probably contained half a legion plus auxiliary cavalry, and had semi-permanent quarters at such sites as Longthorpe, Newton-on-Trent, Kinastoun, and a recently discovered one at Rossington Bridge of 22-3 acres. Smaller legionary detachments were also active, as is shown by the forts at Hod Hill and Great Casterton. Frere believes that Cerialis was based at such a fortress (Longthorpe) at the time of the Boudiccan rebellion in A.D. 60, because the numbers required to replace casualties were consistent with legionary troops of a vexillation rather than a complete legion. It would be after this that the IX Hispana, with its replacements, would be reunited and stationed in permanent quarters at Lincoln.

It is still too soon to be definite about the date of foundation of the fortress, and we must await more excavation from Lincoln itself, as well as from the thirty-acre fortresses at Newton-on-Trent and Longthorpe. The possibility of an auxiliary fort preceding the legionary fortress at Lincoln cannot be overlooked. That the fortress was garrisoned by the IX Hispana cannot be doubted, because of the tombstones found on the site. The legion remained at Lincoln until it moved to York in A.D. 71, when it was replaced by the II Adiutrix, which had just arrived from the Rhineland to replace the XIV Gemina. It probably remained at Lincoln until c. A.D. 75.

It had always been assumed that the fortress occupied the hill-top north of the River Witham. The excavations of 1945-6 proved this to be correct when it was shown that the earth bank and timber defences of the legionary fortress were on the same alignment as the stone wall of the colonia on the western side. The legionary defences consisted of a palisade with earth rampart behind and V-shaped ditch in front. At some later date, perhaps when the II Adiutrix replaced the IX Hispana in A.D. 71, the defences were strengthened by the addition of internal towers necessitating the filling of the original ditch and, presumably, the cutting of another which was subsequently destroyed by the colonia defences.

In 1953 F. H. Thompson cut a section in East Bight to see if the two periods of defences again coincided. He found that the fortress defences were constructed in a similar manner to those found in Westgate and North Row, and also were on the same lines as the later colonia wall. The only problem that remained was the southern defences, and it was in 1955-8 that D. F. Petch showed that both the legionary and colonia defences were again on the same line. This now enabled the area of the fortress to be calculated with certainty at 41.5 acres, which is smaller than other
fortresses of this period. In his discussion of the date of the *colonia*
wall Petch argues for a date of c. A.D. 200,\textsuperscript{74} and by so doing assumes that
the legionary timber defences lasted for 150 years with periodic repairs.
It can hardly be expected that timber defences would last 150 years
without major repair work involving an almost complete replacement of
the original timbers. Even after the timbers had collapsed, the remaining
bank and ditch could have remained in use until the first stone defences
were built; these have now been shown to be of early-second-century
date. If the timbers lasted for about 25 years and were left in position when
the fort was evacuated, this would take us into the early-second century
when the first stone wall would have replaced them.\textsuperscript{75}

III

MILITARY SITES IN ADVANCE OF THE NORTHERN
SECTOR OF THE FOSSE WAY

Since the publication of Dr. Webster's list of sites in advance of the
Fosse,\textsuperscript{76} a number of others have come to light, which have produced
early material. The following is a list of such sites known to the writer.
*It should be emphasised that not all the sites mentioned have been positively
identified as being of Roman date or of military origin.*

Mancetter (SP 3196)

There is evidence, already mentioned, to suggest that the road from
Leicester to Mancetter is of military origin, and is aiming at a possible fort.
In the village, Stukeley\textsuperscript{77} recorded earthworks, and Burton\textsuperscript{78} a coin of
Vespasian; in recent years a V-shaped ditch has been observed\textsuperscript{79} and also a
Claudian coin hoard.\textsuperscript{80}

Wigston Parva (SK 464894) (plate 1(a))

An aerial photograph taken by Dr. J. K. St. Joseph in 1959 showed what
could have been the ditch of a fort. The site was investigated by Miss E.
Blank of Leicester Museum in November 1969, and she showed that the
ditch was V-shaped, four-feet deep and eight-feet wide. There was a
cleaning channel at the bottom. The profile of the ditch would suggest a
Roman military structure, but the excavations did not provide any dating
evidence to confirm this.

Market Bosworth (SK 4003)

First-century pottery has been found close to the site of a villa, and a trial
excavation in 1967 revealed what might be a ditch.\textsuperscript{81} It is too early to say
if this site can be connected with a military settlement.\textsuperscript{82}

Ratby (SK 4905) (plate 1(b))

Five miles west of Leicester lies an earthwork, the shape of which is
reminiscent of a Roman fort. Because of difficulties in visiting the site,
it has only been possible to view this site by means of aerial photographs.
Drawing attention to the earthwork Dr. Kenyon suggested that it might be the fort for Leicester,\textsuperscript{83} arguing in support, both its shape and the fact that, in 1938, a small sherd of a Roman mortarium was picked up in a rabbit scrape. From the plan reproduced in the Victoria County History\textsuperscript{84} it would appear to be about twelve acres in size. Although the shape looks convincing, there are a number of features which throw considerable doubt upon its Roman origins. The present gaps in the bank may not be original, but if they are, then they are not in the positions normally expected for the gates of a Roman fort. If they are not original then where are the entrances? The impression from the aerial photographs is that the earthwork is earlier than the ridge and furrow, but the absence of correctly-spaced entrances and the height of the surviving bank suggest that it is not Roman. The exact nature of the earthwork cannot be determined without excavation.

**Sawley (SK 47\textsuperscript{3}1) (plate II(a))**

Aerial photography has revealed a small rectangular enclosure of 1.5 acres.\textsuperscript{85} It has the appearance of a fort with a possible tutulus in front of one of its entrances. Caution is necessary, because a smaller rectangular earthwork excavated at Sawley has been shown to be of seventeenth-century date.\textsuperscript{86} If it is a Roman fort close to the confluence of the Derwent and the Trent, then it must have been a strategic junction during the early campaigns when, since well-constructed roads may not yet have been built, river transport was likely to have been more convenient for moving the large quantities of stores that the army would require. The significance of the Trent can clearly be seen from the number of military sites close to its banks: Sawley, Thorpe, Holme, Newton-on-Trent and Littleborough.

In 1968 Malcolm Todd sectioned the north defences close to the northwest angle of the earthwork, found a bank of sand and gravel, eighteen-feet wide, and a single U-shaped ditch seven-feet wide and three-feet deep, which was later recut to a V-shaped ditch six-feet wide and two-and-a-half feet deep. The only dating evidence consisted of three sherds of Roman pottery, two from the rampart and one from outside the ditch.\textsuperscript{87} Its date of construction remains, therefore, uncertain.

**Breaston (SK 46\textsuperscript{3}3)**

The building of a filter plant has recently exposed a Roman site consisting of a series of ditches cut into the natural clays.\textsuperscript{88} Two distinct ditch systems were found, both roughly rectangular with U-shaped ditches. Full details are not yet available, but the area of each enclosure is in the order of 1.3 acres. The pottery from the site is said to include mid-first-century sherds of mortarium, flanged bowls, carinated bowls and beakers. A second group of pottery was dated early-to-mid second century, and contained samian pottery. The early date of some of the pottery has led the excavators to suggest a military use for the enclosure, but until the work is published in full it would be unwise to come to any firm conclusions.
LITTLECHESTER (SK 3537)
Dr. Webster, in his report on excavations conducted in 1960, hints at the presence of a fort but lack of early material and concrete archaeological evidence did not permit a firm conclusion at the time to be reached. Some first-century pottery is recorded in the report. Further evidence came to light in 1965 when a V-shaped ditch was found, and considered to be military. Whether it can be attributed to the Plautian frontier zone is still doubtful.

BROXTOWE (SK 5242)
The material from a series of unpublished excavations has been reported by Dr. Webster and points to the existence of a fort. Coins and pottery both suggest a terminal date for the site between A.D. 70-80. Webster favours A.D. 71, relying on the three coins of Vespasian, all of which were minted in A.D. 71. At least two separate ditch systems were found. A brief report on this site has recently appeared.

ARNOLD (SK 5948)
Nearly two miles north of Arnold and six miles north of Nottingham lies an earthwork which has some similarity to a Roman fort. From the plan in the Victoria County History the fortifications would appear to be double-ditched, with rounded corners, and with a tattulus outside the south-east entrance. The size of that part recorded is about 1,251 feet by 720 feet, i.e. an area of 20.5 acres, and it was thought that it continued for some distance in the adjacent field. Supporting its Roman date are a number of coins which are said to have been found there.

HOLME (SK 8159) (plates II(b) and III)
Three-and-a-half miles north of Newark and two-and-a-quarter miles west of Brough, aerial photography has revealed the site of a large marching camp. The length of the west side is at least 600 feet while that of the other side is 1,150 feet giving an area of at least 16 acres, sufficient for nearly a whole legion and, as already mentioned, some distance away from any known road. This must suggest a date in the conquest period. The crop marks on the aerial photographs (plates II(b) and III) suggest more than one structure.

BOUGHTON (SK 6768)
The evidence for a fort at this site is slender. It is described as a rectangular earthwork measuring 360 feet by 180 feet, i.e. an area of 1.4 acres. A ditch, still up to 5-feet deep, was visible in 1939, and it would be surprising if it were Roman. It was interrupted, as were the ramparts, at the north-east corner. The corners were well rounded and there were traces of interior works. Twenty yards to the north-east A. Oswald found part of a tegula and fragments of a white jug which he considered to be Roman. More tile was found in the interior of the earthwork. No material
of an early date has been found to suggest military occupation and the discovery of tiles seems to indicate buildings of a later date in the vicinity.

**Newton-on-Trent (SK 8273)**

Nine-and-a-half miles west of Lincoln lies the site of one of the “30-acre” fortresses already discussed in connection with the foundation of Lincoln. The similarity in the fortresses at Longthorpe and Newton might suggest that they were both constructed by vexillations of the same legion. There is little doubt that Newton is connected with the *IX Hispana*. To the east of the fortress a number of short lengths of ditch have been recorded, but until excavation has taken place it cannot be said whether they preceded the fortress, or formed extra protection under threat of attack. Dr. St. Joseph has suggested that they might have enclosed a supply area, comparable with the polygonal enclosures outside Carpow.

**Littleborough (SK 8282)**

So far there appears to be no evidence to suggest a military site, and, although a number of first-century coins are recorded in the *Victoria County History* the earliest is one of Vespasian. The increasing number of military sites found along the Trent suggests its importance at this early period, and it is to be expected that more of these sites are to be found along the lower reaches of the Trent. One such site would be expected at Littleborough, the lowest fordable crossing point of the Trent yet known, and a date soon after the conquest is the most likely time for the construction of a fort. Whether it was linked by road to Ermine Street at this time is uncertain, but in view of the fact that Newton and Holme were not, it seems likely that Littleborough also relied upon the Trent for its communications during the first few years of Roman occupation.

**Old Winteringham (SE 9421)**

The presence of Claudian timber buildings seems to indicate the site of a possible fort. Excavation has also shown the presence of a number of well-made roads, but so far no military objects have been found.

**IV**

**Military Sites to the Rear of the Fosse Way in the East Midlands**

**Horncastle (TF 2569)**

The evidence for a military site is very slender and rests solely on the Claudian coins recorded in a *History of Horncastle*.

**Ancaster (SK 9843)**

For some time it has been suspected that a fort existed on the site, but it was only in 1963 that conclusive evidence was found during excavations conducted by the University of Nottingham. A 9-feet-wide ditch of
military type was found having a V-shaped profile, but no drainage channel; it was traced for 40 feet. In 1968 another ditch 16-feet wide was found 10 feet to the south of the first and running parallel to it. The fort is dated to the Claudian period.105

GREAT CASTERTON (TF 0009)
Not until the summer of 1959 did aerial photography reveal the exact site of the fort that had long been suspected in the area.106 The photographs clearly show that the main fort was defended by two parallel ditches, and that these were only interrupted in front of the gateways, of which there were three, with no porta decumana. The size of the fort is 415 feet by 630 feet, over the ramparts, giving an area of 6 acres. Another ditch is visible from the air, and was also identified by excavation, 88 feet northwest of the inner ditch on the south-east side of the fort. It has a gate on the same line as the Via Praetoria of the larger fort. Excavation has shown that this ditch represents a reduction in the size of the fort to 5.16 acres.107 It is likely that the first fort was founded shortly after A.D. 43-5. The assumption that the reduction took place around the time of the Boudiccan uprising can no longer be upheld since the publication of the results of excavations conducted in 1960 and 1962, which show that the date is likely to be after A.D. 70.108 No firm date can be given for the evacuation of the fort, but it is suggested that occupation is unlikely to have lasted long after A.D. 80.109

WATER NEWTON (TL 1297)
A fort measuring 510 feet by 460 feet has been known for some time, but has not yet been investigated.110

LONGTHORPE (TL 1597)
Reference has already been made to the increasing number of "half legionary" fortresses that have been discovered recently. One such fortress is at Longthorpe111 in the Nene Valley. It lies on a gravel terrace north of the river, and measures 1,200 feet by 1,000 feet giving an area of 27.5 acres. Although the aerial photographs only show two ditches on the west, north and east sides, excavation in 1967 confirms112 that the south side was also defended by a double ditch. A smaller enclosure lies within the main fort which has only one ditch on each of its sides, the southern boundary being coincident with that of the larger fortress. It is square, each side being 725 feet, an area of 12 acres. This smaller enclosure has apparently only two gates, with one on the north side and the other re-using the south gate of the larger fortress. Both gates of the smaller fort align with those corresponding in the larger fortress and so do not occupy central positions in the ramparts. This suggests that the inner enclosure was built after the larger structure, and that it was laid out with reference to the existing fortress. Excavation in 1967 seemed to confirm this, for the outer fortress ditch had become filled with rubbish which would hardly have been
allowed if the fortress was still occupied. Beside the street leading to the north gate was found a timber granary,¹¹³ and the gate itself was excavated.

Caves Inn (SP 5379)
Recent rescue work in gravel pits alongside the A 5 shows that the civil settlement of Tripontium spreads along Watling Street for some distance.¹¹⁴ There is a little evidence to suggest military fortifications on the site. In 1953, to the west of Watling Street, a patera was found¹¹⁵ similar to others found in forts of the first century,¹¹⁶ and during excavations in 1967 a quantity of early first-century pottery, including samian, was found.

V
CONCLUSIONS
During the military occupation of the East Midlands the River Trent played an important rôle as a means of communication, and made it possible for supplies to be taken into the heart of the Midlands. Before the establishment of well-made roads the Trent may have been the only convenient means of transporting large numbers of men and supplies along the northern part of the frontier zone. This would account for the forts that have been found in the Trent Valley, some of which appear to have been occupied only for a relatively short time. It might also account for the small size of many of them, if they were only supervisory detachments.¹¹⁷

It is some ten years since the last major work on the Fosse Way was published by Dr. G. Webster, and since then more forts have been discovered, and others that were suspected have been confirmed. The number of such sites has increased considerably and it is obvious that even now there is still a great deal more to be learnt about the activities of the Roman Army in the East Midlands. It is likely that more military sites will be found and, with their excavation, together with those already known, the course of events in the decades after the conquest will become clearer.
APPENDIX

A NOTE ON SOME EARLY ROMAN POTTERY
IN NEWARK MUSEUM

by

MALCOLM TODD

The following vessels were found in the Northgate area of Newark at some uncertain date in the early part of this century. All are complete specimens and probably derive from graves. At least one second-century vessel from the site still contains cremated bones, and the report of the workmen who excavated then suggests that there were many other pots serving a similar purpose:


ii. A second example of the same form (not seen). Newark Museum 713-1

iii. Large jar or cooking-pot in gritty, buff-light brown fabric. Rim flattened to horizontal plane. Height 19 cm. Hofheim 87. Claudian to early Flavian. Newark Museum 77-1

iv. Large flask in grey fabric, with similar coat. Common Gallo-Belgic form, but the type is long lived. Sharp profile of the specimen suggests a first-century date. Height 24.5 cm. Newark Museum 71-1

None of the other sherds from the Northgate site appears to be so early. There is, however, one Claudian coin (a dupondius of Antonia) and three Flavian pieces.
The following abbreviations are used:


*Arch.*  *Archaeologia*

*Arch.Journ.*  *The Archaeological Journal*, Royal Archaeological Institute


*C.I.L.*  *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*

*D.A.J.*  *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*


*J.R.S.*  *Journal of Roman Studies*


*T.B.A.S.*  Transactions and Proceedings of the Birmingham Archaeological Society

*T.B.G.A.S.*  Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

*T.L.A.S.*  Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society

*T.T.S.*  Transactions of the Thoroton Society

*V.C.H.*  *Victoria County History*

1. The subject matter of this paper, written in January 1969, arose out of research carried out by the writer on the Roman East Midlands; where available, the results of the excavations since then have been incorporated in the paper. Dr. J. K. St. Joseph kindly provided and has granted permission for the use of air photographs in the five plates reproduced. A number of people have kindly discussed various problems with me and I am grateful to Miss J. Mellor, J. May, J. B. Whitwell, and D. F. Mackreth for their help. In particular my thanks must go to Malcolm Todd and John Wacker for their constant help and advice throughout the work. Finally I should like to express my gratitude to Professor S. S. Frere and J. S. Wacker who have read an early version of this paper and made helpful suggestions.

2. Suetonius, *Vespasian*, 4

3. *Britannia*, 71

4. West Midlands Archaeological News-Sheet vi (1963), published by Group 8, C.B.A. An auxiliary fort is known and this may be earlier. See also M. G. Jarrett, "Early Roman Campaigns in Wales", *Arch.Journ.* cxxxi (1964), 24, and M. G. Jarrett, "Legio XX Valeria Victrix in Britain", *Archaeologia Cambrensia*, cvii (1968), 79

5. *J.R.S.* xiv (1924), 252

6. Tacitus, *Annals*, xii, 31

7. *Academy* 28 April and 19 May, 1883

8. In his several editions of Tacitus which were first issued in the 1880s


10. *ibid.*

11. *Arch.Journ.* cxv (1958), 49

12. *ibid.* 59


14. *ibid.* 7, and the section fig. 3

15. T.L.A.S. xlii (1967-8), 63, and *J.R.S.* lvii (1968), 186


17. Jewry Wall, 9

18. In T.L.A.S. xxxvii (1961-2), 64 there is a note of a pre-Neronian floor containing a Coritanian coin, but the excavators were not certain that these levels were pre-conquest

19. *Arch.Journ.* cxv (1958), 52, f. 8


21. *J.R.S.* lvi (1966), 203, and *ex.snorm*. Mr. J. S. Wacker

22. *Arch.Journ.* cxv (1958), 84 and fig. 5

23. *Arch.Journ.* lxv (1918), 26-7
25. R.I.B. 752
26. British Museum Guide, Antiquities of Roman Britain, 1951, fig. 35 for its inscription see C.I.L. vii, 495
27. R.I.B. 752
28. J.R.S. xlix (1959), 113, and ex. inform. Mr. J. S. Wacher
30. T.L.A.S. xliii (1966 - 7), 1
31. Full references to this site are given later
32. Carried out by Dr. F. M. Heichelheim and briefly reported in J.R.S. xxxix (1949), 104
33. Letter from Mr. B. R. Hartley, dated 26 Jan. 1965
34. T.T.S. xxxi (1927), 57
35. F. Oswald, The Commandant’s House at Margidunum, (Nottingham, 1948)
36. J.R.S. lvii (1967), 183
37. T.T.S. xxxi (1927), 66
38. Recorded in Leicester Museum files and the find dated to 7 May 1940.
41. T.L.A.S. xxviii (1956), fig. 6
42. J.R.S. lix (1967), 183
43. J.R.S. lviii (1968), 186 and information from a visit to the site
45. J.R.S. xliii (1953), 91; xlvi (1958), 98, pl. xv I
46. e.g. Arch. Journ. cxv (1958), pl. ix a
47. J.R.S. liv (1964), 159 and fig. 12. Also ex. inform. Mr. J. S. Wacher
48. J.R.S. lii (1966), 203 and fig. 10
49. T.T.S. lxix (1965), 19
50. Ibid. 21-2
51. T.T.S. xlvi (1938), 1
52. Kindly brought to my attention by M. Todd. Mr. Radcliffe of Newark Museum and Art Gallery made them available for inspection.
53. For a detailed description of the pottery see Appendix.
54. Arch. lviii (1963), 573, pl. lv
55. J.R.S. xliii (1953), 91; lii (1961), 132, pl. x 2
56. T.T.S. x (1966), 63. There is however an outline plan of the trenches in V.C.H. Notts. II (1910), 11
57. This shows best on pl. vii, J. S. Wacher, The Civitas Capitals of Roman Britain (Leicester, 1966).
58. J.R.S. li (1961), 120
59. J.R.S. xxxix (1949), 57
60. Letter from Mr. B. R. Hartley dated 26 Jan. 1965.
61. J.R.S. xxxix (1949), 59
62. Britannia, 71, f. 3
63. American Numismatic Society Notes and Monographs, No. 65; C. H. V. Sutherland, Coins and Currency in Roman Britain, (London, 1937), 10 et seq.
65. Britannia, 70-1. For a suggested date of A.D. 48 for the formation of these units see pp. 78-9
66. J.R.S. lv (1965), 75; lvii (1968), 189
67. J.R.S. lv (1965), 74
68. T.B.A.S. lxxii (1955), 100; J.R.S. xlvi (1958), 94
69. Information given in a lecture by Dr. J. K. St. Joseph to the Society of Antiquaries, 11 Jan. 1968
71. J.R.S. xxxix (1949), 57
72. J.R.S. xlvi (1956), 22
73. Arch. Journ. xxvii (1960), 40
74. Ibid. 51 and 54
75. J.R.S. lii (1967), 181
76. Arch. Journ. cxv (1958), 55
77. Itin.Cur. ii (1776), 20
78. Nichols, History of Leicestershire, iv, 1027
79. T.B.A.S. lxxiv (1956), 36
80. T.B.A.S. lxxix for 1960 and 1961 (1964), 117-120. The question of imitations has already been referred to
81. Ex. inform. Mr. K. Clarke, who did the work
82. Further excavations have been conducted on this site
83. Eforo Wall, 3-4
84. V.C.H. Leics. I (1907), 253
85. Photograph taken by Dr. J. K. St. Joseph, and brought to my attention by M. Todd. Also see, D.A.J. lxxvi (1967), 165
86. T.L.A.S. xli (1965-6), 74
87. Ex. inform. M. Todd
88. D.A.J. Archaeological Research Group Newsletter, No. 10 (December, 1967), 4
89. D.A.J. lxxvi (1966), 124
90. D.A.J. lxxxvii (1967), 165
92. East Midlands Archaeological Bulletin, No. 8 (1965), 30. Mr. D. F. Mackreth kindly discussed the site with me
93. Brought to my attention by M. Todd. V.C.H. Notts, I, 300. under Ramsdale Park
94. ibid. 6
95. J.R.S. li (1961), 120
96. T.T.S. xliii (1939), 6
97. ibid. 6
98. J.R.S. lv (1965), 74, fig. 2 and pl. x i
99. In a lecture to the Society of Antiquaries.
100. V.C.H. Notts, II (1910), 19
102. J. Conway Walters, History of Horncastle, 1908, 4
103. Arch. Journ. cill (1946), 19 refers to Claudian coins from Ancaster
104. J.R.S. livi (1966), 203; livii (1967), 182; liviii (1968), 184
105. Interim report from the University of Nottingham, and ex. inform M. Todd
106. J.R.S. li (1961), 119
107. M. Todd, The Roman Fort at Great Casterton, Rutland, (Nottingham, 1968), 18
108. ibid. 39
109. ibid. 40
110. Antiquity xiii (1930), 178 and 455. J.R.S. xxix (1939), 208; xliii (1953), pl. ix i
111. J.R.S. lv (1965), 74 fig. 1 and pl. ix
112. J.R.S. livii (1968), 189 and from a visit to the site
113. for a plan see J.R.S. livii (1968), 190 fig. 13
116. For other examples see Arch. Journ. cvv (1958), 69 and 70
117. Since this paper was written the pottery from Margidunum has been analysed and the results suggest that the site was not occupied until after A.D. 55/60. This fact, and the current views on the foundation of the legionary fortress at Lincoln, hint at a later date for the northern part of the frontier zone.