

ART. XVIII.—*Tillesburc*. By the EDITORS.

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NEAR Coniston, on the way to Little Langdale, is the hamlet of Tilberthwaite, well known for its slate quarries and for its scenery. Like many of the dales it is not generally known for its antiquities, but it seems to possess a history. The earliest form of the name is *Tillesburc*, so written in the confirmation of the agreement between Furness Abbey and William de Lancaster, touching the division of Furness Fells; the date of this document is between 1157 and 1163 (Dr. William Farrer, *Lancs. Chartulary*, p. 311). In the Final Concord of 1196 about the same division (printed by Beck in *Ann. Furn.*) the place is called *Tildesburghthwait*, that is to say the fields near Tillesburc or Tildesburgh, where High and Low Tilberthwaite now stand. Later copies of the documents in the Furness Coucher Book give the name as *Tilburthwaite* and *Tyldeborgethwaite*.

Professor Harald Lindkvist, in *Middle English Place-names of Scandinavian Origin* (Uppsala, 1911, p. 124), remarks that the name Tillesburc "must have disappeared at an early period, . . it probably contains the O.E. personal name *Tilli* or *Tili*, being an exact counterpart of the present Tilbury in Essex, which is written Tiliberia, Domesday Book, Tillebiri 1249 [etc.] The spelling Tilde-," he says, "is presumably due to miswriting." He compares also Tillethwayt, near Skelsmergh, in an inquisition of 1374.

The name *Tilli* occurs in the Durham *Liber Vitae*, and is presumably Anglian, not Norse. *Tilli* would be the occupant of something in the way of a fort or refuge there,

in days later than the penetration of the dales by non-Cymric settlers, but earlier than the 12th century. The late Eiríkur Magnússon, on a visit to the place and seeing the ridge which we suppose to represent the site in question, which stands above the fields in the form of a tent, suggested to us that *Tilde* (if that were the original reading) might represent the old Norse *tjald*, meaning "tilt" or tent. But the oldest form is *Tille*-, and the intrusion of a *d* is probably parallel to the same change in Whynnefeld for Whinfell, etc. (see p. 46 of this volume), a change which occurred both in Norse and in English. Professor Ekwall, in his recent book on Lancashire Place-names, supports the view that the name means Tilli's castle.

We had long supposed that the "castle" was represented by the ridge of hill in the Low Coppice, east of Yewdale beck and of the road from Coniston to Tilberthwaite, where the signpost points out the path to Tilberthwaite gill and its picturesque bridges. The north end of the ridge is midway between Holme Ground and Low Tilberthwaite. The beck between the road and the ridge is here at about 450 feet above sea, and the crest of the ridge reaches more than 550 feet, giving a hundred feet of steep rise. The whole ridge is about a sixth of a mile long, but its breadth is only about a third of its length. Both east and west sides are rocky and precipitous and the arêtes are sharp, forming a site naturally defensible and needing no ramparts to make it a stronghold dominating the valley. To the east of the ridge runs a shorter and lower ridge; the dell between the two is very sequestered and contains a ruin which some day may be taken for a beehive hut in remarkable preservation, but is recent. It is probably one of the places where Lanty Slee carried on his illicit whisky distilling; he lived at Tilberthwaite for a time in the middle of the nineteenth century and he died very old in 1878 or 1879 (H. S. Cowper, *Hawkshead*, pp.

231-234; G. D. Abraham, *Fell and Rock C. C. Journal*, 1916). Beside hut ruins, there is, on the westward side, an old pitstead where charcoal has been burnt.

The ridge above is cut up by small edges and hummocks of rock. Between them are little hollows, some of which are deep enough to form chambers, needing only a roof, which could easily be contrived by laying timbers or boughs across the natural rock-walls. The site is not without analogy, for at Peel Island in Coniston water we found, and excavated over 25 years ago, similar habitations in a narrow cranny of rocks. On the island, indeed, there was a certain amount of masonry, building up the ends of the little chasm; there was also the ruin of a bloomery-hearth; and mediaeval pottery, millstones and slag were found. The plan and relics can be seen in the Coniston Museum; our Society visited the place in the 'nineties, but there was no description in these *Transactions*.

With the kind leave of Mr. Victor Marshall of Monk Coniston, then owner of Tilberthwaite, we attempted a little digging in these rock-hollows. We found no masonry, and the tangle of roots—for the ridge is thickly overgrown with trees—made a thorough exploration difficult. But the ground in these spaces differs from the soil elsewhere on the ridge by containing a stratum of disturbed whitish-grey sandy clay, in which small flakes of stone lie horizontally, with fragments of charcoal. This stratum is about two inches thick, underlying six to eight inches of black vegetable soil, and overlying four or more inches of dark grey sandy clay full of vegetable matter. This last is the natural surface, upon which there has been an occupation-level, trodden down, as the horizontal stones show, for the floor-spaces can never have been pools in which water arranged the stones. And the fragments of charcoal show that they have been the floors of dwellings, similar to the floors found in 1922 within the

ramparts of the Castle Crag at Mardale (see *Proceedings* in this volume).

We did not find, either at "Tillesburc" or at Mardale, any pottery or relics to date the site. On the N.W. side of the Tilberthwaite ridge there are traces of a path leading up to the summit and perhaps built up in places. We do not venture to say that the path is part of the original plan, for digging gave no indications of its age.

It seems, then, that in the 12th century some spot at Tilberthwaite was known as Tilli's fort, and that on this ridge there once were dwellings in a highly defensible position. The remains, such as they are, resemble the presumably earlier hut-floors of the Mardale Castle Crag and the perhaps later rock-huts of Peel Island. The traces of building on the Castle Rock of St. John's Vale, and the Castle How in the upper Duddon valley, show that such rocks were used as defensible sites before the time when the Norman settlement made it unlikely that these rude refuges could be in regular use. But as the name of Tilli's burg remained until Norman times, indicating an Anglian occupant, it seems to point to the age immediately before the Normans as the period of occupation.

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