

ART. VIII.—*Allen Knott earthwork*. By R. A. C. LOWNDES, M.A.

*Read at the site, July 12th, 1963.*

**Introduction.**

ALLEN KNOTT earthwork is on a rocky knoll in the Parish of Windermere,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of Windermere town; Nat. Grid Ref.<sup>1</sup>: NY 414010. From its summit, 742 ft. above O.D., there is a magnificent view of Lake Windermere, the Langdale peaks, and Troutbeck Valley.

The ground falls away steeply to the north and west, with a gentle slope to the south and east; the north-east flank of the hill is deeply cut into by a quarry (see Fig. 1).

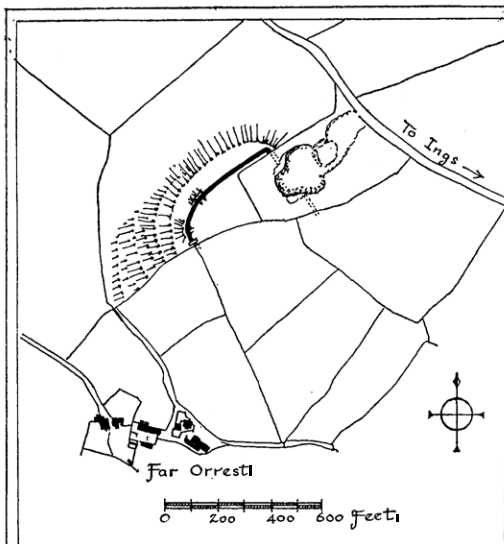
In April 1963 the author was asked by Prof. E. Birley to investigate the site, in preparation for the visit of this Society on 12 July 1963. The earthwork had previously been surveyed and described by R. G. Collingwood in 1912, and published in CW2 xiii (1913) 143-146 (with plan). In that article, Prof. Collingwood came to the conclusion that the site was probably the remains of a medieval pelegarth; he referred briefly to the site again in CW2 xxiv (1924) 83 n., when he considered that it might be a "native fort", though still reluctant to abandon the "pelegarth" theory.

W. G. Collingwood in *Lake District History* (1925) 22, thought that Allen Knott might turn out to be a "British stronghold". The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments<sup>2</sup> called it a "Hill Fort" without attempting to offer a date. The *RCHM* description, incidentally, stated that "the rampart on the N.W. side survives and rises some 7 ft. above the ground inside the enclosure." This figure must clearly be a misprint.

Since R. G. Collingwood's 1912 survey, the quarry

<sup>1</sup> Ref.: 1-inch O.S. map sheet 89; 6-inch sheet NY 40 SW; 25-inch sheet, Westmorland XXXII 4.

<sup>2</sup> *RCHM Westmorland* (1936) 274a.



# ALLEN KNOTT

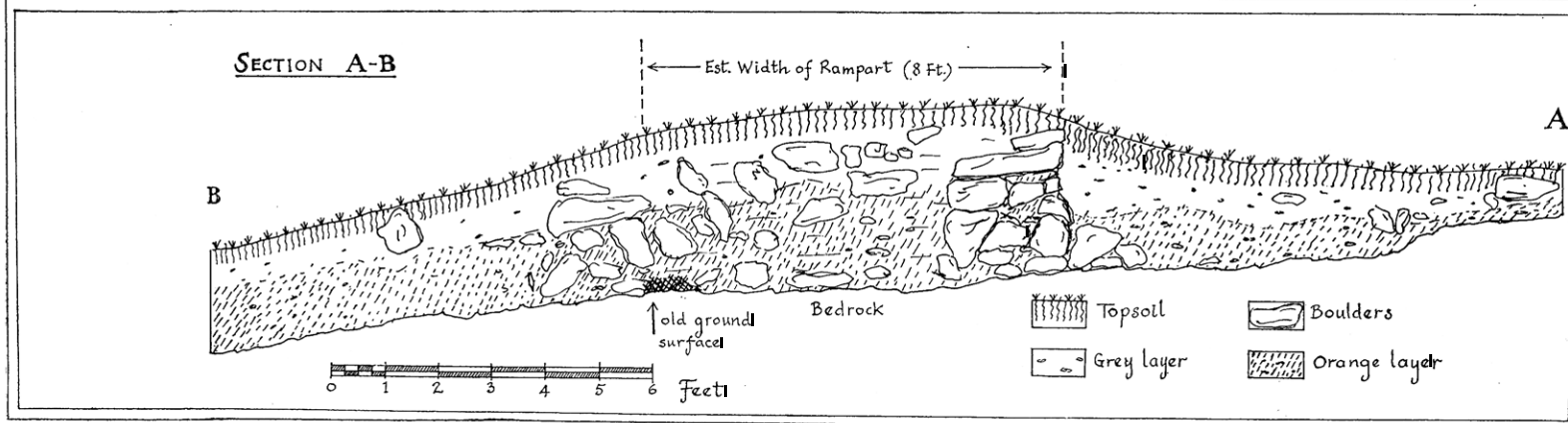
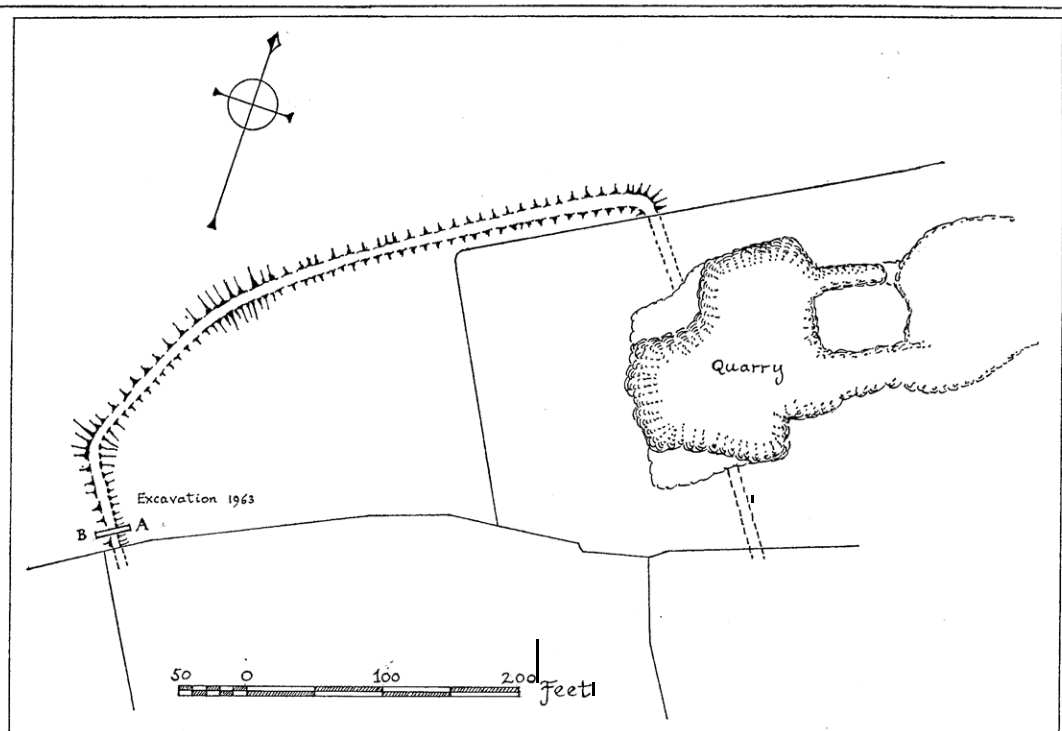


FIG. 1.

has been greatly extended, and has removed almost the whole of the N.E. rampart shown on the 1912 plan. The site is now safeguarded from any further quarrying.

The present state of the site is shown by Fig. 1 (facing), and is discussed below.

Prof. Birley suggested that, in addition to surveying the site, it would be helpful to have a section cut through the rampart. This was done during the period June to August 1963, and the section is illustrated in Fig. 1 also (facing), and discussed below (p. 96). There were no finds of pottery or other datable objects.

### **Description of the site.**

When R. G. Collingwood wrote in 1912, he pointed out that the existing remains probably represented barely one-half. Since then, of course, more has gone in the quarry; but there are still some 180 yards of the rampart visible. The apparent rectangular tendency is probably due to natural features — the earthwork tending to follow the contour of the hill, inside the 700 ft. line.

The quarry intrusion has the advantage of giving a natural section through the rampart, and makes it clear that there was no ditch.

All traces of the earthwork are lost south and east of the stone wall which runs across the site. This makes it difficult to estimate the size of the enclosure, but one can probably assume that it was between 2-4 acres.

There are no signs of any structures within the enclosure, nor was there in 1912. Nor is there any record of finds being made on the site.

R. G. Collingwood in his 1912 article mentions a "rock-cut entrance" leading up to the north-western crags; also a trace of a second, internal, rampart:<sup>3</sup> Neither feature can be recognised today.

The original entrance would presumably have been on the (destroyed) south-eastern side, where the slope of the ground is gentler.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* 144.

### The excavation.

The position chosen for a section through the rampart was at the S.W. end of the visible rampart, 12 ft. north of the wall-junction (see Fig. 1). The section was cut at right angles to the rampart, 25 ft. long and 3 ft. wide.

The construction of the rampart was a dry-stone facing, which survives well to a height of four courses on the eastern side of the section; the core of the wall was filled with loose boulders set in earth filling.

The western edge of the rampart has collapsed and slid somewhat downhill, making it difficult to identify exactly the original wall-face on that side. It can perhaps be traced through a patch of darker soil, cross-hatched on the section drawing, which would seem to be the original ground surface, sealed by the wall-construction.

If this estimate is correct, the rampart would have had a width of 8 ft. There was no sign of any stake-holes for a palisade; but there is hardly enough height surviving for such to remain.

The excavation has been filled in, and the site returned to permanent pasture.

### Conclusions.

The natural strength of this hill-top position, the substantial length and thickness of the rampart, and the probable size of the area enclosed, would seem to indicate that this earthwork can be regarded as a *fortification*, rather than simply as a stock enclosure.

The date of its building continues uncertain. It is surely not a Roman military work; if it *was* constructed as a defence, this would not have been permitted to the local dwellers during the Roman occupation. It might be post-Roman; it seems at least equally probable to be earlier. There are no relevant parallels in the neighbourhood. Perhaps the most one can say is that there is nothing to contradict its being a small Early Iron Age hill-fort.

**Acknowledgements.**

The author would like to express his gratitude to the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, for a grant towards the cost of the excavation and survey; to Miss Clare Fell and Miss Dorothy Charlesworth for their helpful comments on the interpretation of the section; to Mr H. Leigh Groves and Mr C. Clark for permission to excavate; and to the members of Cressbrook School for their willing labour.