CRATCLIFF ROCKS — A FORGOTTEN HILLFORT ON HARTHILL MOOR, NEAR BAKEWELL, DERBYSHIRE

By G. A. MAKEPEACE

INTRODUCTION

Since 1980 only two additional fortified enclosures have been identified and discussed; Gardom's Edge (Hart 1981, 79; Hart 1985; Ainsworth & Barnatt 1998) and the newly discovered hillfort at Conksbury — Cranes Fort (Hart and Makepeace 1993). Gardom's Edge enclosure was known by the author as 'Megwalls' when surveyed by Butcher in the early 1960s (Beswick and Merrills 1983, 28, figs. 12, 13) and was recorded as such in Cameron (1959, 43). Gardom's Edge enclosure was surveyed as part of the prehistoric landscapes being discovered at that time on the gritstones, east of the Derwent (Beswick & Merrills 1983).

The author has always felt that the little known fortification at Cratcliff Rocks (Preston 1954, 12; Hart 1981, 77; Makepeace 1985, 59, fig. 22) has not had the attention it needed in the past and it is hoped that this article will result in its inclusion in future research. The identification of this earthwork as a hillfort was the result of a survey conducted by the author into hillforts of the region following the discovery of the new hillfort at Conksbury.

Cratcliff Rocks lie on Harthill Moor, 6.5km south of Bakewell, and are close to an undated ditched and banked enclosure and the hillfort of Castle Ring (Fig. 1). The Cratcliff site is also close to other archaeological sites, for example, Romano-British settlements on and around Robin Hood's Stride, Watscliff and Carrs Wood (Makepeace 1998, 118–19); an Early Bronze Age site near Sanctuary Wood SK224630 (Makepeace 1963, 1); and Nine Stone Close stone circle. The Early Bronze Age cemetery on Stanton Moor lies some 2km to the east.

THE SITE

The fort lies on a rising gritstone promontory called Cratcliff Rocks (SK227623), *c.* 265m OD and 100m above the Ivy Bar Brook to the east. The northern and western approaches are less severe than the southern and eastern and rise gently above the surrounding moor. The area around the hillfort is strewn with gritstone boulders of various sizes together with larger earthfast blocks and natural outcrop, and is masked by thick, dense bracken which may be why the site in the past has had little attention. Promontory and headland hillforts are naturally defensive sites where the land drops steeply on at least two sides and other hillforts of this type in the Peak District (Trustram 1911; Preston 1954) include Carls Wark, Coombs Moss, Cranes Fort, Balls Cross, Fin Cop, Burr Tor and 'Megwalls' (Gardom's Edge).

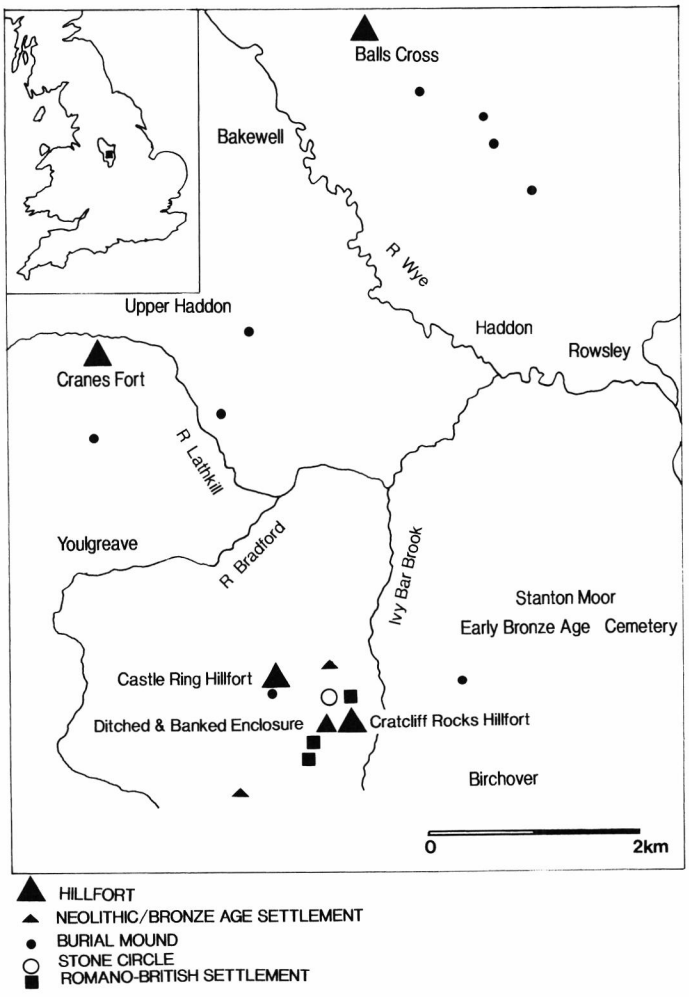

Fig. 1: Cratcliff Rocks: location and general area.

THE HILLFORT

The fort's defences consist of a massive, 55m long, boulder wall cutting off the higher part of the gritstone promontory (Fig. 2). The wall is 2 to 3m wide and today approximately 0.8 to 1m in height, with some of the orthostats even higher.

The steeper western slope of the promontory may have been reinforced by some form of walling 20m long. Most of this today is represented by tumbled boulders but fragments of what may have been continuous wall remain close to the north-western corner of the hillfort.

The main wall appears to have a gap or simple entrance towards the fort's north-eastern sector. This has utilised at least one, possibly two, naturally earthfast boulders. The entrance appears to be slightly inturned but this may be as a result of the collapse of the wall at this point.

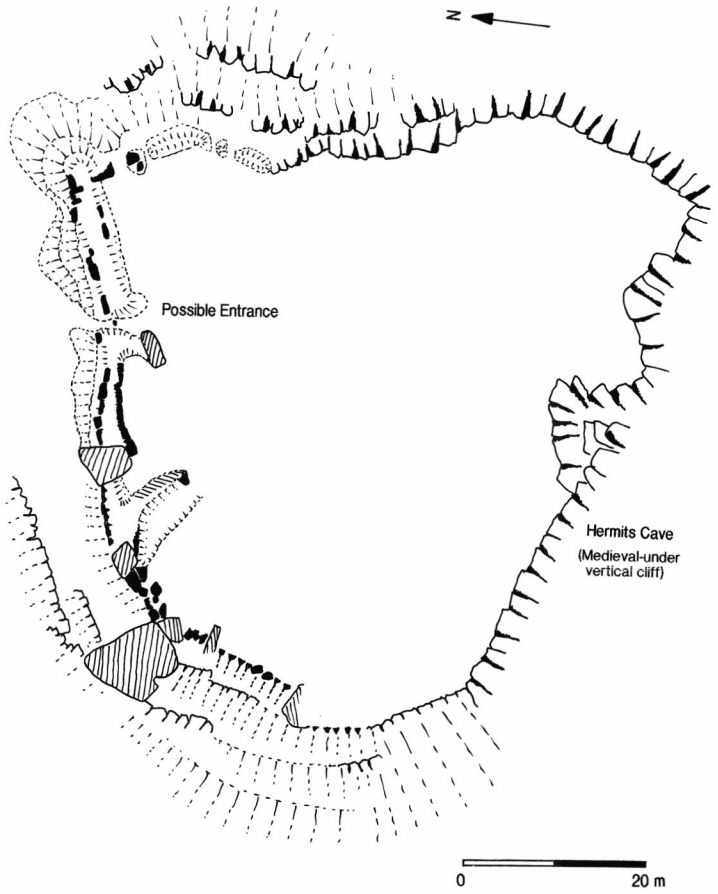

Fig. 2: Cratcliff Rocks hillfort.

The wall is revetted in places with coursed gritstone blocks on the inner and outer faces, together with large boulders (orthostats) set on edge. Where this has been preserved the boulder revetment is at least two to three courses high, possibly more, but the thickness of the decayed vegetation makes this difficult to ascertain without excavation.

The wall makes use of the many earthfast boulders on the northern and north-western sides. The north-western corner of the rampart is formed from revetted blocks of gritstone which run for 30m along the south-westward crest of the steepening gritstone outcrop, which gradually becomes precipitous. A natural vertical crag forms the southern edge of the fort.

The fort's interior is littered with large earthfast boulders and natural outcrop but there are few small boulders, suggesting that these had been used in the construction of the rampart or wall. There are no signs of any domestic features which could suggest house sites, but areas between the large earthfast boulders and outcrop could easily have been utilised to make some kind of dwelling or lean-to.

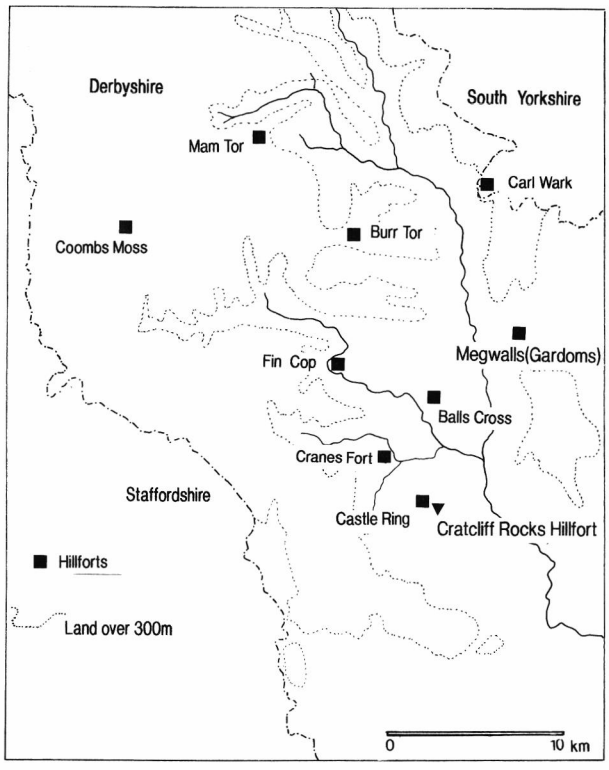

Fig. 3: Hillforts of the Peak District.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this discussion is to postulate a number of ideas about the relationship of the earthworks on Harthill Moor to one another and their possible date. Also to open up the debate on how they relate to other hillforts in the region. Unfortunately no excavations have been conducted on these sites and there has been little recent work on hillforts in the Peak District except for the work at Mam Tor (Coombs 1971; Coombs and Thompson 1979) and the new hillfort at Conksbury (Hart and Makepeace 1993). By adding the Cratcliff Rocks hillfort to the number and including the fortified enclosure 'Megwalls' on Gardom's Edge (Hart 1981; Hart 1985; Beswick and Merrils 1983; Ainsworth & Barnatt 1998), the total number of hillforts/enclosures in the Peak District is now ten (Fig. 3).

This then raises questions about their relationship and date. Are they contempory with one another or do they range from the Neolithic through to the Late Bronze/Early Iron Ages? Are any hillforts in the Peak District actually 'Iron Age'? Some appear to be Bronze Age, for example, Mam Tor (Coombs 1971; Coombs & Thompson 1979), Ball Cross (Stanley 1954) and the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age site of Castle Ring (Makepeace 1990, 29). There is a need also to relate these sites to their enviromental contexts (Barnatt and Smith 1991, 24).

Cratcliff Rocks hillfort is situated very close to a ditched and banked enclosure and not far from the Castle Ring hillfort (Fig. 1) and all three may, therefore, have been

constructed at different times. The occupation of Harthill Moor goes back to the Early Bronze Age and possibly to the Neolithic. The archaeological evidence for this are monuments such as the stone circle in Nine Stone Close, burial mounds, the Early Bronze Age settlement site near Sanctuary Wood (Makepeace 1963, 1), plus various references in Bateman's 'Ten years Diggings' (1861, 84) and 'Vestiges' (1846, 126–28), Hart's Survey (1981, 77, 79), the Howarth Catalogue (1899, 12, 80, 81, 172).

Castle Ring is a univallate hillfort of the contour type, situated on a slight knoll overlooking the Bradwell Valley. The fort is approximately 61m × 84m in size, covering around 3/4 of an acre. Here the author has found similar pottery to that found at the Harborough Rocks Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age settlement (Makepeace 1990), and Roystone Grange (Thomas 1991), which may indicate an approximate date *c.* 700–500 BC for its occupation. This site has similar characteristics to Staple Howe, East Yorkshire (Brewster 1963).

The other two sites on Harthill Moor are not likely to be contempory. The author suspects that both Cratcliff Rocks hillfort and the ditched and banked enclosure are earlier on the grounds of artefactual evidence and site morphology. There is no archaeological evidence of later activity on the moor except for the Romano-British settlement on and around Robin Hood's Stride and the Medieval 'Hermit's Cave' underneath Cratcliff Rocks.

The author has found Neolithic/Bronze Age flints and prehistoric pottery in and around the ditched and banked enclosure as well as the occasional Romano-British sherd, possibly from the settlement site at Robin Hood's Stride (Romano-British pottery has been found all around the base of Robin Hood's Stride). The ditch of the enclosure is internal to the bank, with a possible entrance on the south-eastern side. The enclosure is roughly ovoid in plan with what appear to be at least two circular dished hollows internally which may be house sites (Hart 1981, fig. 7.5; Makepeace 1985, fig. 21). This site could be a protected homestead and could be 'Bronze Age' in date. A rim sherd of a coarse fabric, possibly early prehistoric, has come from the ditched and banked enclosure (G. A. Makepeace *pers. comm.*).

Cratcliff Rocks hillfort is similar in construction to sites which begin in the Neolithic, for instance at Carn Brea (SW686407) and Helman Tor (SX168607), Cornwall (Mercer 1990, 30–32). Stone revetments/walls have also been identified at Ball Cross (Stanley 1954), Mam Tor (Coombs and Thompson 1979) and Coombs Moss (Ramm 1957). A re-examination of the hillforts in the Peak District is required, as many could be earlier than the Iron Age (Coombs 1971; Coombs and Thompson 1979, 44–47). This has also been suggested by Elsdon (1993, 1) on the basis of the pottery for Mam Tor, Ball Cross and the Harborough Rocks settlement. In addition Roystone Grange has produced similar pottery to that from Castle Ring and Harborough Rocks (Thomas 1991).

Cratcliff Rocks fort has similar characteristics in its contruction to Carl Wark on Hathersage Moor and 'Megwalls' (Gardom's Edge). Carl Wark is set in the midst of a large area of Bronze Age settlement and land clearance on Hathersage Moor and should be considered in that context rather than as Dark Age, as proposed (Preston 1954, 11). The stone rampart is backed by a turf bank and this type of rampart (probably a box-type rampart) has now been shown to be Bronze Age, although most are of timber and not of stone (Challis and Harding 1975, 111). Today the top of the gritstone wall has slumped inwards.

The massiveness of the construction at Carl Wark, using weathered gritstone boulders for the rampart and for the southern wall, which runs along the edge of the gritstone outcrop, is similar to Cratcliff. The Bronze Age settlement and clearances on Hathersage Moor compare with sites along the East Moors, east of the Derwent.

One hut circle on Hathersage Moor produced a shale/cannel coal bracelet (G. A. Makepeace *pers. comm.*) similar to those from Swine Sty (Machin 1971, 11–13; 1975, 207–09), Mam Tor (Coombs and Thompson 1979, 43–44) and Back Tor (Makepeace 1994, 7), possibly suggesting a date somewhere between the Early and Late Bronze Ages.

'Megwalls' on Gardom's Edge is another 'fortified' area situated on a rockier higher outcrop of gritstone abutting the Bronze Age settlement and field systems of Gardom's and Birchen Edges. This is a massive construction over 610m long and enclosing an area of rough moorland. The wall is discontinuous with a number of breaks or gaps (Ainsworth & Barnatt 1998) and is constructed of massive boulders set on edge with rubble infill. The large size of this defensive enclosure may reflect the need to protect animal stock rather than man (Mercer 1990, 29), which may suggest a date in the Early Bronze Age or Late Neolithic as has also been argued by Ainsworth and Barnatt (1998, 17) (see also note below). The few clearance cairns found inside the enclosure may be later and part of the 'field clearance' phase. It is postulated that the 'Megwalls' enclosure came first and that the settlement and fields of the Bronze Age came later, expanding over the landscape from the Early Bronze Age. This would suggest a late Neolithic date for the enclosure. The discontinuous wall is reminiscent of causewayed enclosures and it may be that such sites are the Highland Zone's answer to causewayed enclosures.

No Neolithic fortified structures have been found in the region yet there is ample evidence for Neolithic occupation (Radley and Cooper 1968; Hart 1981, 34–47; Garton 1991). Radley (1968, 37) records the problem of no Neolithic 'fortified' or defensive enclosures such as causewayed camps in the Peak District, and this is reiterated by Garton (1991, 6). Cratcliff Rocks hillfort ought to be seen as part of a developing environment where people were beginning to settle down but there was a need to protect themselves as well as their livestock. 'Megwalls' (Gardom's Edge), Carl Wark and Cratcliff appear to belong to a different period of fort construction from the other hillforts in the region. Another possible candidate is Burr Tor which is similarly placed to 'Megwalls' and the ditch appears to be interrupted or scooped in places, although it may be possible to argue that this indicates an unfinished fort.

Well-planned survey and excavation using the latest environmental and dating techniques should unravel the complexities of these sites and could open up other questions which would enable some of the 'missing' links in our understanding of later prehistoric periods to be interpreted. This paper is aimed at stimulating further debate and possible action.

Editor's note: This paper was first submitted for publication in 1994 before publication of the Ainsworth and Barnatt paper (1998).

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