

XIV.

RECTANGULAR ENCLOSURE ON GREEN CRAIG, FIFE.

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One mile south of the Tay and seven miles south-east of Dundee lies one of the numerous hill-forts of Tayside.¹ It is listed in the Royal Commission's *Inventory of Fife*² as No. 144, and is described as follows:—

“This fort (Green Craig) is situated 600 feet above sea-level, on the crest of a ridge, about half a mile north-west from the old Parish Church of Creich (450 feet O.D.), but it is now hardly recognisable. It is only with difficulty that the outline of the main enclosure can be traced. It is oval in plan, and lies with its major axis east-north-east and west-south-west. It measures approximately 96 feet from north to south and 113 feet from east to west, and is bounded by a low much-spread rampart, which shows a good deal of stone, and may originally have been a wall. There are two entrances, one at the south-west and the other at the south-east.

Appearances suggest that the site has also been defended by a fairly strong wall running along the precipitous rocky scarp on the north side, but there is no very clear connection between this and the main enclosure. The wall is in a ruinous condition, and its line can be identified only by fragments of debris between natural outcrops of rock-surface. 27 May 1925.”

The six-inch map, Fife, III, 14 (surveyed 1893, and revised 1913), shows the precipice towards the Tay, and marks a circular enclosure of about 110 feet diameter on the top of the hill, and outside it on the slope of the ridge towards the south a bank. This runs southward from the eastern end of the precipice in a wide arc, then turns north until it reaches the west of the precipice, so that altogether an area is enclosed 400 feet from east to west by 500 feet from north to south. But the site is really much more complex. There are traces of a second enclosing bank to the north-east farther down than the outer bank on the map. Inside these banks there are many circular depressions like hut sites; the ring on top looks more like an irregular enclosure with isolated huts, and there was certainly never a continuous stone wall running along the precipitous rocky scarp on the north side. The two outer banks are probably not contemporary, as the outermost bank on the north-west (before it joins the inner) was evidently a wall with an inner and outer face, whereas the inner bank (that on the map) was a terrace-bank of the type represented by the ramparts of Kaimes Hill, Midlothian.³ This terrace-bank reaches the precipice at the north-east

¹ Nat. Grid ref. 37/324215.

² P. 68.

³ V. G. Childe, “The Defences of Kaimes Hill Fort, Midlothian,” *P.S.A.S.*, vol. lxxv. (1941), p. 43.

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some 30 feet farther east than is shown on the map. We may conclude that the fort, which is very vulnerable from the south, was a village or oppidum-like settlement at the time when the terrace-bank was in use.

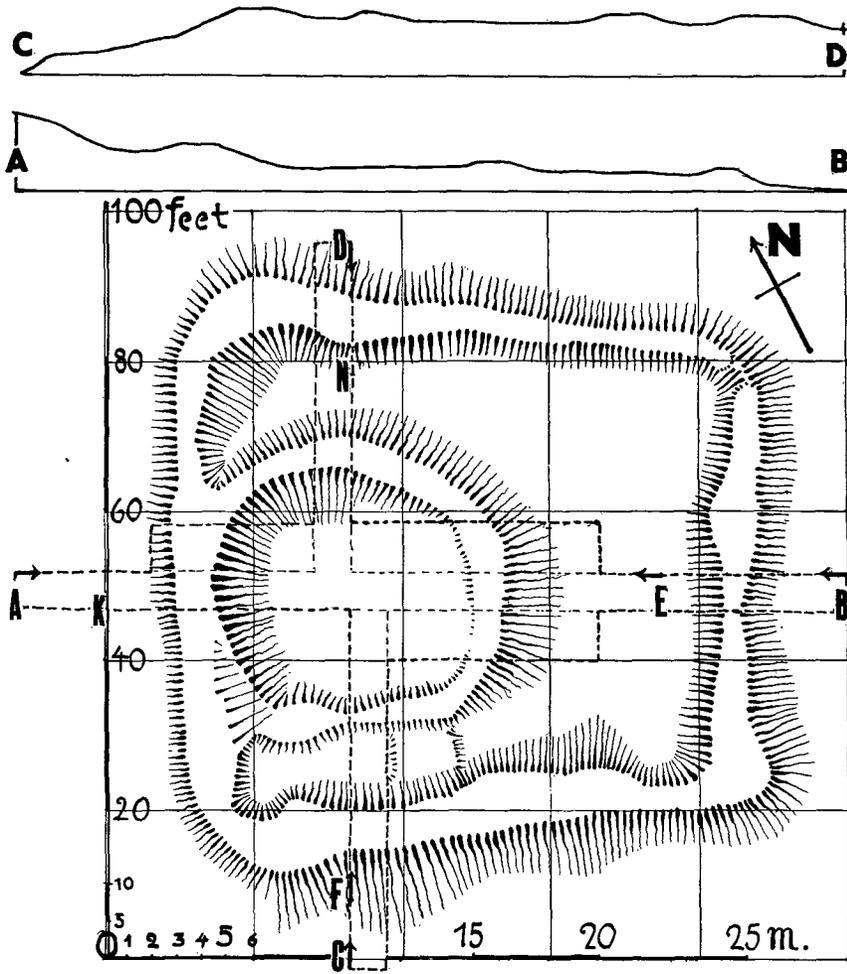


Fig. 1. Plan of enclosure at Green Craig (broken lines show limit of excavation). Above are profiles of present-day surface, west to east (A-B) and north to south (D-C).

Careful survey of its complex features may reveal, even without excavation, its different components.

Outside the hill-fort on the east towards the precipice, a small natural plateau of triangular outline lies directly under the terrace-bank, at 500 feet above sea-level. It ends towards the south-east, towards the valley, in a kind of spur. To the west the base of the triangle is formed by the end of

the talus of the terrace-bank of the hill-fort. The northern side slopes steeply towards the depression which separates Green Craig Hill from the neighbouring ridge of Black Craig (650 feet O.D.), whereas the southern side slopes gently towards the broad valley in which the village of Brunton is situated (350 feet O.D.). On the western part of this plateau lies the rectangular, almost square enclosure with which this report principally deals. Its banks are marked like a field-wall on the six-inch map, and it is not mentioned in the *Inventory*.¹ Four low banks, respectively 25, 24, 22 and 25 m. in length, with flat tops still rising 1 to 2 feet above the ground, enclose an area of some 400 square metres. A plan of the enclosure is given in fig. 1, based on a survey by my wife, Dr Maria Bersu. The square, with sharply rounded corners, takes up almost the whole breadth of the plateau. In the north and south only a kind of short berm remains outside the banks, whereas to the east a level but rocky part of the plateau is left outside the enclosure. So the squarish outline of the enclosure is not necessitated by the terrain, and must be intentional. The enclosed area slopes slightly to the south-east. A roughly circular bank of similar appearance to the enclosing banks (inner diameter 10 m.) touches the inside of the western bank, that towards the hill-fort. No gaps gave any indication of an entrance into the enclosure or into the inner circle, but a thinning of the bank of the inner circle on the south, and a broad shallow rise between this and the southern bank, seemed to indicate that an entrance was once situated here, at a natural approach to the enclosure. The surface of the plateau is to-day rough pasture, no stones rise out of the ground, and there are no traces that the ground has ever been cultivated.

The site looked quite well preserved. Its exposed situation precluded its being the ruins of a modern sheep pen. As it had special merits because of its situation outside the hill-fort, and as a similar type of site had not yet been tested by excavation in Scotland, the remaining week of the 1947 campaign (see pp. 241-263) of the St Andrews League of Prehistorians was spent on a trial excavation of it. It turned out that the site is much more destroyed than its present-day condition led us to suppose. Moreover, the subsoil is not suitable for the excavation of a habitation site (see sections, fig. 3). Under a thick layer of modern fine peaty humus *d* lies a coarse greyish glacial gravel *b*, mostly material from the Highlands, which covers the plateau's solid rock *a* (andesite). The rock is broken by cracks, and there are broader and smaller fissures filled with heavy clayey rubble *e* (mostly fragments of andesite) of a somewhat more brownish colour than the overlying gravel. These conditions, the lack of any trace of an old surface,

¹ 300 feet to the south of it, about 50 feet lower than the plateau, there lies on a flat part of the slope another rectilinear enclosure of similar dimensions, with the ruins of a rectangular building (? cottage) inside it. The stones of the walls of the building have been taken away, so that flat trenches mark the outline of the building. Another isolated homestead of this type, in a similar raised position lies on the hill west of the old manse of Brunton, above the cottage of Mr J. A. Harley.

which is very hard and apt to break up in irregular splinters. The outline of the post-holes (with the exception of those inside the inner circle) is somewhat irregular for no holes could be made by picking, and instead whole blocks isolated by natural fissures had to be taken out.

Enclosure Banks.

The two cuttings (AB and DC, fig. 1) made from north to south and east to west were long enough to ascertain that there was no ditch outside the banks. Section DF (fig. 3) through the northern bank (NB) shows the natural gravel *b* above the rock *a*. On the gravel there lies in the middle of the bank a layer of very fine light brown soil *c* (1.50 m. broad) without any stones. Outside and inside of *c* we have a layer of andesite rubble, and on top the thick modern humus *d*. The southern bank (SB) overlies the rubble filling of a fissure *e*. Here the core of light brown soil *c* is lined on the outside and inside by two big blocks of andesite. In the section through the eastern bank (not illustrated) we again met the core of brown soil *c* and inner and outer facing blocks. The scanty remains of the enclosure bank are the last remains of a bank built up by sods *c* and lined by blocks in order to give the bank more strength. When this bank had been robbed of its facing of blocks, the sod core was eroded by wind and water, and so we have no means of getting information as to the original height of the bank. Its width 1.80 m. and its facing by stones allow us to assume that it was originally just as high as modern field walls are and constructed in the same way, say 1.50 to 2 m. high. The few remaining blocks of the face allow no statement as to whether the blocks were set as orthostats or flat.

Enclosed Area.

Inside the bank the surface of the gravel *b* (the top layer of the untouched soil) differs in no way from the layer *b* outside the enclosure. Near the eastern stretch of the inner circle two shallow depressions in the rock floor, and another near the northern stretch (P in fig. 2), may indicate that some wooden structure once stood in this area (Pa in section AE, fig. 3, gives diameter and depth of these holes). The relatively large dimensions of these holes give no indication of the size of the timber, as the rock breaks away here very irregularly, while sizable andesite blocks which they contained could not with certainty be regarded as packing-stones, as such blocks are frequently mixed with the gravel. Only the stripping of a larger area inside the enclosure could provide further clues to the character of these features, which might indeed have been shallow pits.

The Inner Circle.

Three sections through the bank of the inner circle (BH in fig. 3) show that here, instead of a core of decayed sods, we have a rubbly core of small stones and fine earth *f* again faced by bigger blocks inside and out. On the eastern side (see fig. 2, and BH, section AE, fig. 3) one course of probably orthostatic blocks is preserved on both faces, the total width being 1.20 m. The sections through BH show that where the facing blocks have been robbed

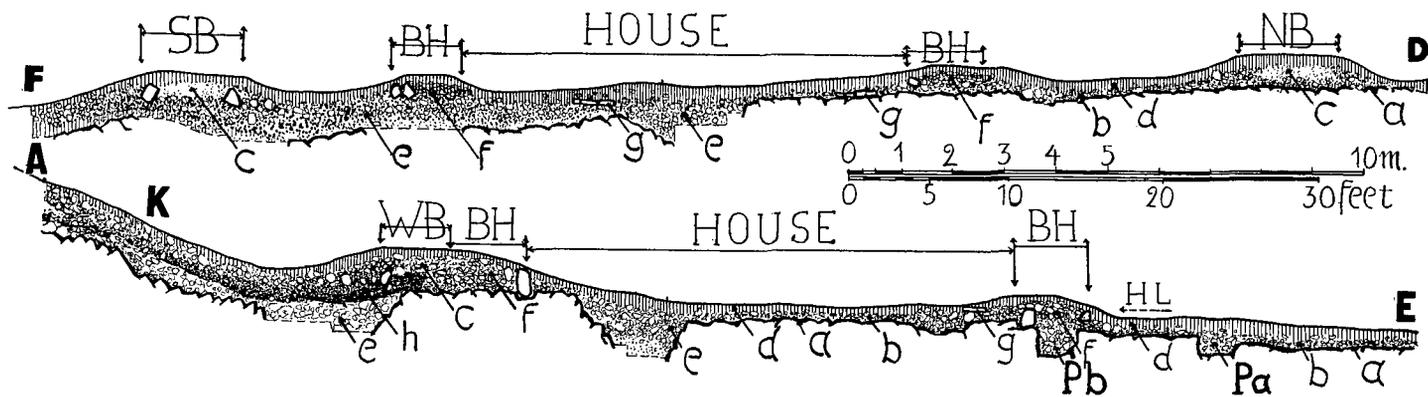


Fig. 3. Vertical sections F-D, A-E (see fig. 1).

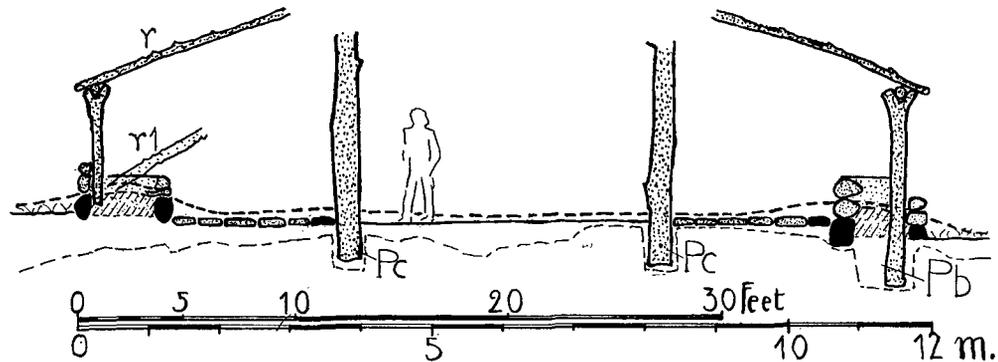


Fig. 4. Reconstruction diagram.

(Black, blocks lining rubble core; remains of rubble core obliquely hatched. Thick broken line, present-day surface; thin broken line, rock-floor.)

not much rubble core has been spilled, so that, since there is no reason for taking away such rubble filling, unlike the useful facing blocks, the bank of the inner circle can never have been very high. Under the western side three big well-made post-holes of identical dimensions (P. fig. 2) were found. The most northerly of these holes P*b* is cut in section AE, fig. 3. No such hole was found to the north, where the rock was extremely solid. To the west, where the bank of the inner circle merges with the enclosure bank, they were together 2.80 m. wide, as proved by the remains of the inner and outer faces. The section AE, fig. 3 (WB, BH), shows inside the rubble filling *f* and outside the sod core *c*. The blocks of the outer face are set in a darkish layer *h* of rubble and clay mixed with charcoal, fragments of burnt clay and animal bones. This layer *h* lies on yellowish-brown filling of a fissure *e*, and can be traced to A in the full length of the western part of our cutting AE. Layer *h* is obviously material washed down or thrown down from the terrace-bank of the hill-fort, and had accumulated at the foot of the terrace-bank on the plateau before our enclosure had been built. Layer *h* ends rather abruptly inside the bank WB, BH, as if it had been dug away when the foundation of bank BH of the inner circle had been built. We learn from this that the occupation of the hill-fort is earlier than the enclosure bank and the bank of the inner circle, and that the latter was the first of the two to be built. But the arrangement of the facing blocks in the ground plan, fig. 2, shows clearly that both banks belong together, and that the difference in time between them represents only a stage in the construction of the whole site.

The original level of the floor inside the circle is indicated by the remains of a pavement of carefully and closely placed slabs of andesite *g*, best preserved on the north (fig. 2). The sections in fig. 3 show that the surface of the floor lies directly under the modern humus *d* and that no occupation layer covers the pavement. In the eastern half of the circle are four post-holes (P, fig. 2), 2.50 to 3 m. distant from the inner face of the bank. They are smaller (30 cm. diameter) than the post-holes mentioned above, but go down 40 to 50 cm. into the rock. The structure of the andesite at this spot allowed the making of holes with smooth vertical sides. They are filled with coarse gravel, but the bigger material in the two easterly holes was clearly arranged like packing-stones. A section through these holes is used in the reconstruction diagram, fig. 4 (P*c*). The broad fissure in the western part of the circle made it impossible to ascertain if there had been post-holes there also, and if a complete ring of posts once existed. The high level of the floor and the bad state of preservation made it impossible to ascertain if the central part of the circle had also been paved, and if there had once been a hearth there.

An entrance to the inner circle seems indeed to have lain in the south (E, fig. 2) in conformity with the surface indications. It is marked by the blocks facing the bank west of E and the lack of rubble core at E. Further evidence is the situation of three post-holes (P, fig. 2) between the bank and the inner post-holes, which they resemble.

The state of the subsoil, the nature of the rock and the fissures in it, the ruined state of the site and the lack of an occupation layer, make it difficult to interpret the archaeological features of the inner circle. Nevertheless the fragmentary evidence can be summed up in the statement that it represents the ruins of a round house contemporary with the enclosure.

Reconstruction (fig. 4).

This house is quite a respectable building, being 12 m. in outer and 10 m. in inner diameter.¹ The section AE, fig. 3, shows it placed on a natural platform, which gives it not only a certain prominence but also helps the drainage. (The letters HL in fig. 3 mark the level of the pavement inside the house as against the level of the surface outside of it.) Its position on the west side of the enclosure, at the foot of the slope up to the hill-fort, provides some shelter for the house. The inner diameter of 10 m. makes an inner ring of posts necessary as roof supports. The four posts P in the eastern half of the circle (fig. 2) are evidence for such a ring, 5 m. in diameter, consisting of seven or eight posts when complete. The evidence showed that the outer wall of the house, a rubble core faced on the inside and outside by blocks 1.20 m. wide, was never much higher than the existing core indicated in our reconstruction by oblique hatching. An obvious function of such a low outer wall is to support the rafters of the roof. But in that case our outer wall would have been too low for people to move easily inside the house in the area between the wall and the inner ring of posts (*r1*, left, in fig. 4). Even if the roof had been steeply inclined that area could, on such a reconstruction, only have been used for storage purposes or beds—a rather wasteful use of a roofed-in space. The existence and level of the pavement *g* in this area make it, in fact, unlikely that the space had ever been taken up by beds. Further, in view of the exposed character of the site, there are serious objections against the existence of a steeply inclined and therefore high roof. So we may assume additional vertical wooden posts set in the circuit of the earthen bank as support for roof and rafters. If these posts had been 1.50 m. high above the pavement, full use could have been made of the space near the wall. The posts could not have been much higher, in order to avoid a too great elevation of the central part. Moreover, in view of the dimensions of the house, the roof supports need a stronger foundation than a low earthen bank can provide: they need within the bank a proper foundation, such as isolated posts which could support a horizontal beam on which the rafters could rest. Three big post-holes P were indeed found in such a position. The size of the low bank would have been sufficient for there to have been set in it, in the interval between these posts, thinner vertical posts to form the upper part of the house wall and to provide additional support for the roof timbers and the sods, which may be assumed as roofing material (*r*, left, in fig. 4). If the big posts were set on the outer edge of the post-holes *Pb*, as shown on the right in fig. 4, and the smaller posts on the outer edge of the bank, as on the left, there would be width enough on top of the bank to allow of its use for a bench or beds, and such would be its main function. The verification of such a conception of the

¹ Cf. The Little Woodbury house, Wiltshire, 15 m. in diameter, (*P.P.S.*, vol. vi. (1940), p. 80, fig. 20).

outer wall on better preserved sites would be worth while, and whether such construction is a characteristic feature in certain areas, perhaps with rocky subsoil or of certain periods.¹

The three post-holes north of E (fig. 3) might mark posts supporting an entrance hall; they are set so close that they are possibly not all contemporary but may partly indicate repairs. Unfortunately the fissure to the east made it inopportune to look for the opposite wall of the suggested hall.

CONCLUSIONS.

The reconstruction in general fits well into what we know about round houses used as dwelling-houses in a farmstead, and no evidence was found to contradict the interpretation of the whole site as a homestead or farm. There was apparently only the one building with an earthen bank, but the post-holes outside the inner circle may have belonged to granaries or other wooden buildings for agricultural use inside the enclosure or farmyard.² The yard is rather small in proportion to the house, and not many cattle could be sheltered in it. Perhaps the ruins of the hill-fort still provided in those times some shelter for cattle if trouble occurred. We found no positive evidence of the type of agriculture or husbandry, but it may be noticed that the fields below Green Craig to-day are first-class corn-growing land. No traces of ancient fields to be connected with our site are, however, visible, as in the neighbourhood of similar hut-circle sites in Wales or Cornwall. As the farmstead has a wide view to the south, and eastward towards the Tay estuary, it takes more advantage of a natural situation than does, say, the nearby mediæval castle of Creich in the valley. Yet since the plateau is overshadowed by the hill-fort, and the outlook hampered by the top of Green Craig and the neighbouring Black Craig, the homestead is in no way defensively sited. Nevertheless there must have been a reason for the choice of this raised windswept position, somewhat out of the way, but overlooking the seashore and the communications in the valley to the south. A fundamental change in the occupation pattern south of the Tay is implied by the abandonment of the hill-fort on Green Craig, and the building instead of the small isolated farm. Rectilinear enclosures with round huts, quite often more or less rectangular, seem also to exist outside other hill-forts, indicating that the change was general in south-east Scotland.³

¹ Surface indications of many hut-circles make it likely that the earthen banks were quite often not very high, even when we allow for wind erosion.

² The possibility that these posts belong to lean-to sheds or penthouses is not altogether to be excluded, but it is unlikely that they are part of a veranda, as the house is built into the wall of the enclosure.

³ Cf. Maiden Castle, West Lomond, *Fife Inventory*, No. 242; airphoto fig. 12 shows rectangular enclosure. Another example is in "Forts on Whitcastle Hill, Upper Teviotdale," *P.S.A.S.*, vol. xl. (1906), p. 16, fig. 1. There are also small rectangular enclosures at the south-western base of Traprain Law (not mentioned in previous publications, nor is a curved one on the western foot of the hill).

Probably many rectangular enclosures of our type have been regarded so far as modern sheep-pens, just as our quite conspicuous enclosure was omitted when the *Inventory* was made. Many will have vanished owing to modern agricultural activities, particularly if we infer from the smallness of the yard that the farm was that of corn-growing people, who will have used good land still tilled to-day. The lack of an occupation layer in our house and enclosure seems to indicate that the farm was not long inhabited, but not that the period was necessarily very short. Organic deposits on the surface, unprotected by trees or bushes, would be quickly eroded by water and wind, and we saw that even the old surface (turf-line) had vanished. Relics, such as pottery, food waste, etc., would decay before a protective layer of modern humus grew up; and the spoliation of the facing of the banks was another destructive factor. The only fair certainty is that the farmstead did not perish by fire.

Dating

No finds were made which allow any direct dating of the site. Some bits of charcoal and minute fragments of calcined bones found inside the enclosure as well as inside the house may not necessarily belong to the time of the farmstead, as they could have been spread from the hill-fort (layer *h*, fig. 3).

Some relative dating is given by the farmstead being subsequent to the hill-fort, for forts with terrace-banks belong to the Iron Age.

We do not yet know if enclosure walls with stone facing and a core of sods are in the area of the Tay and the Firth of Forth a typical feature of a certain period.¹ A bank with stone facing and a core of sods at Traprain Law can now be dated with some certainty as belonging to the Dark Ages, for it is stratigraphically proved later than late Roman times.² On the other hand, this bank at Traprain Law can be seen to be earlier than a homestead of "scooped enclosure" type which is mediæval.³

Likewise a general survey of the known farmsteads with one big house with earthen bank does not contribute much to the relative dating of Green

¹ Building enclosure walls of sods with a facing of stones should be treated as a rather noteworthy construction where, as at Green Craig and at Traprain Law, enough suitable stones can be collected from the surface without any quarrying, as is done to-day, to build the usual field dykes.

² S. H. Cruden, "The Ramparts of Traprain Law," *P.S.A.S.*, vol. lxxiv. (1940), p. 48, and the unpublished results of a trial excavation at Traprain Law undertaken by the author of this paper in 1947.

³ The most northern of the entrances on the western slope of Traprain Law cuts this turf-bank in a way which makes it evident that these gaps are in their present-day appearance younger than the turf-bank. The track leading through these entrances has, as R. B. K. Stevenson showed to me on the site, a continuation which ends inside the area enclosed by the turf-bank at a site which looks similar to the "scooped enclosures" published by him in *P.S.A.S.*, vol. lxxv. (1941), p. 92.

Craig.¹ The bewildering variety and the complex features of many of these habitation sites make it still impossible to use surface indication alone to establish a reasonable typology. Our enclosure has two typical features: the enclosure is rectilinear, and the house is built into the enclosure bank. Theoretically we could suppose that a rectilinear bank is a very characteristic feature, and that it is unlikely that the same people would build in the same period and in the same area curved and straight enclosing banks. But houses built into the enclosure bank occur with both kinds, and many sites are known which combine straight and curved banks.² For the area just south of the border, H. E. Kilbride Jones states³ that rectilinear enclosures with round huts are quite common, but huts built into the wall are rather scarce. He mentions that of the fifty or more sites listed in the *Westmorland Inventory*, only five have such huts. His complex site at Milking Gap, High Shield, Northumberland (second century A.D.) has one such built-in hut. A. H. A. Hogg,⁴ who has also recently dealt with these enclosures, connects the rectilinear earthworks in southern Northumberland with one or two sites in Anglesey, and points to Roman or post-Roman connection. For Anglesey,⁵ W. J. Hemp sees indeed in the tendency towards straight lines in the enclosures a feature rather of Roman than of native origin, and such farms in Anglesey where they could be dated are of late Roman or sub-Roman period. Pant-y-Saer⁶ for example, with a hut built in the wall, is the classic type of that sort of farmstead which can be dated by finds from the fourth to the sixth centuries A.D. So some evidence for the northern parts of Great Britain points to a somewhat late date for our farm,⁷ but no weight can be attached to the lack of finds, Roman or otherwise.

We are fully aware that many conclusions in this paper are tentative; they are written down in order to incite further research. We are still far from drawing historical conclusions and from connecting the different types with ethnological units. But the example of this short trial excavation may show, on the other hand, that with a relatively small amount of labour and expense some results can be obtained which certainly will enable us to make progress by accumulating more evidence.

¹ Even if there is on a site to-day only one house traceable by earthen banks or orthostats, we do not know without excavation if there were inside the enclosure other buildings entirely constructed of wood, which leave no surface indications behind after they have decayed. So even Green Craig cannot with certainty be classified as a farmstead with only one building inside.

² Example of a built-in hut in curved enclosure in *Dumfries Inventory*, No. 412, p. 143.

³ *Arch. Aeliana*, vol. xv. (1938), p. 331 (Milking Gap, High Shield, Northumberland).

⁴ *Antiquity*, vol. xvii. (1943), p. 136 (valuable map, fig. 4); *ibid.*, vol. xix. (1945), p. 82.

⁵ *Inventory of Anglesey*, 1937, p. lxxv. Rectangular and curved enclosures occur also in the neighbouring counties, Caernarvonshire and Merionethshire.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷ We have to keep also in mind that already in the Bronze Age rectangular enclosures are known from the south of England (Plumpton Plain, Sussex; Boscombe Down, Wiltshire; Cranbourne Chase, Hampshire, etc.) (V. G. Childe, *Prehistoric Communities*, p. 191).

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