

ART. XXII.—*Report on an Exploration of the Romano-British Settlement at Ewe Close, Crosby Ravensworth.*
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Communicated at Carlisle, September 12th, 1907.

AT the Society's excursion in July of this year to sites on the Crosby Ravensworth moors, it was proposed that part of the recently formed Research Fund should be devoted to the exploration of the "British settlements" in that neighbourhood, of which very little account has been given in these *Transactions*. The remains at Ewe Close, though not visited on that occasion, were chosen for a first attempt because of the curious problem offered by the fact that dykes, apparently in connection with a "British settlement," overlay the line of the Maiden Way, suggesting a date very much later than the Roman period. It will be seen that this suggestion proved to be illusory, but the structure brought to light was none the less worth investigation and record, although no museum treasures happened to be met with in the course of a search which was directed almost exclusively to the determination of the plan of the buildings. The few casual finds of pottery, &c., were enough to give the period of the settlement, and the work done, taken together with the examination of Urswick Stone Walls in 1906, adds to our knowledge of this type of remains, which have been much discussed but little explored.

Ewe Close is an intake on the moor, at a height of 850 feet above the sea, one mile east of Oddendale and on the southern brink of the little valley of Dalebank Beck, which runs from Oddendale to Crosby Ravensworth. There it joins the Lyvennet in its deep valley which lies

nearly north and south, passing due east of the settlement at about three-quarters of a mile. South of Ewe Close the land rises gently to five or six hundred feet higher, a slightly undulating tract of limestone rock thinly covered with turf, here and there wet but for the most part dry and open, and sprinkled with boulders chiefly of granite. From Ewe Close the Roman road known as the Maiden Way runs in a south-south-westerly direction towards the Tebay gorge, and is still fairly traceable as a grassy causeway over the moor; but to the north it is lost from the point where it leaves the ruins of the settlement, apparently broken by its descent into the valley, and reappearing only after some miles of its northward course. The hut-circles and dykes of Ewe Close cover an area of about 1000 feet long, east and west, by about 800 feet broad, north and south; but of this large area our operations covered only the northern central part, a well-defined group in a space about 350 feet square. In this part the ruins were most conspicuous, and the dykes overran the Maiden Way.

Leave to dig was kindly given by the Earl of Lonsdale through Mr. Little, and by the tenant, Mr. R. J. Todd of Crosby Ravensworth Hall; the Rev. Sidney Swann of Crosby Ravensworth was so good as to find five workmen, and the exploration began on Monday morning, September 9th, and lasted for three days under the writer, assisted by Mr. R. G. Collingwood and for part of the time by the Rev. J. Whiteside, the Rev. S. Swann, and Mr. C. J. Ruston-Harrison. The cost to the Society's Research Fund was £4 3s., including 10s. compensation for disturbance of the soil.

THE DYKES ACROSS THE MAIDEN WAY.

In two places at Ewe Close there are ditched embankments crossing the Roman road in such a manner as to suggest that the remains associated with them are post-Roman. If these dykes were contemporary with the

settlement it might be inferred that the settlement was made at the very late period when the Maiden Way had ceased to be used, or that there had been some reason for stopping the way. Such reasons occurred in Iceland, where in two different sites tenth-century settlers built their homes across the public road in order to force travellers to stop and accept hospitality. In other counties roads have been blocked from less amiable motives. But here it seemed puzzling that a "British Settlement," of a type usually assigned to the Roman period or earlier, should have thrown its dyke across the public path. The Ordnance surveyors, indeed, in the six-inch map (as revised in 1897) have made the road pass through the slack between the dyke A B (see the general plan) and the settlement wall K L, and this in spite of a great boulder D which stands in the course of the supposed road. But about 500 feet to the south there is another dyke distinctly crossing the road. A third line, crossing still further south, though marked in the Ordnance map as an ancient dyke, is merely the footing of a comparatively modern fence wall, now thrown down.

As the dyke A B C is well defined, and at first sight not dissimilar from the settlement walls, and as the well marked line of the causeway of the road seems to aim straight for a point between B and C, the trench E F was dug. In this the road was found, 25 feet across, edged with large stones, upon which there was a slightly raised and hogbacked metalled road of 20 feet broad. At G H the cobble-paved causeway measured 33 feet across, though without definite step and kerb, while at I J the whole causeway was 26 feet broad, with 20 feet of raised road. No doubt the edges of the road have been damaged, and as our object in digging was not to examine the road in detail but merely to fix its position, we did not stop to make further excavation of the causeway, but gave our attention to the dyke.

A trench was dug from E northward, uncovering the

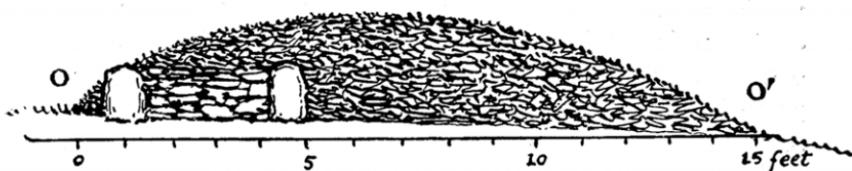
western edge of the road, and making a section of the dyke B C. This proved to be formed of loose earth and stones thrown up from a ditch dug on the south side of the embankment and destroying the road. It was evidently made at a time when the Maiden Way was no longer used as a main route, and as Roman roads continued in use for centuries after the departure of the Romans, this dyke, and any dykes associated with it, must be of mediæval date, unless the settlement walls could be shown to be contemporary, in which case we should have the puzzle of a definite and intentional stoppage of the public way. But a little further examination showed that the dyke A B C and its continuation for about 1000 feet to the westward, as well as the dyke already mentioned as crossing the road 500 feet to the south, were not of the same structure as the settlement walls. The walls proved to be of masonry, while these dykes, like others on the moor and elsewhere, formed of earth thrown up from a ditch, appear to be mediæval boundary dykes of the type which must have been common before dry-stone fencing came into use. Their apparent connection with the settlement is accidental, except that here the ancient settlement walls appear to have been used to form a continuation of the boundary. The deflection B A and the slack between this and K L perhaps indicate an outrake from the Oddendale valley which lies to northward. These mediæval dykes probably enclosed the *hagi* or pasture land belonging to the *tún* lands in the valley below.

THE SETTLEMENT WALLS.

Uncovering the grass-grown bank at K* we found a solid stone wall, about five feet thick, but with no defined face; there were, however, pieces of worked stone in the débris,

* The bits of wall shaded black in the general plan are those actually uncovered and examined: the parts shaded with dots are apparently stone-work, the facings indicated by a broken line where they could be traced without digging.

at the foot of the wall. At L the wall was about 5 feet 10 inches thick; here the fence curves round to avoid a corner, in the style of a Roman camp. Passing a low gap on the north side, apparently a modern break for a sheep-trod, at M we found the inner face of the wall, formed of large dressed stones, but the northern face had fallen away, the ground being lower on the outside of the enclosure than on the inside, and the remaining wall in consequence only four feet thick. At N the northern face was again missing, but the inner side of the fence wall was built of large stones set on edge, and the party wall (4 feet 2 inches thick) running towards the central building was definitely bonded into the fence wall, leaving no doubt as to the skill and intention of the masons. The original size and height of the fence wall could be judged at O, where the wall was found under a large bank of ruin, and (as so often happens) not in the centre of the bank nor even under its highest part. The accompanying section (O to O¹) shows the footing of the wall, 4 feet



6 inches broad, built of great facing-stones set on edge and packed with rubble, lying in the spoil-bank, which is 15 feet broad and 28 inches high from the ground in its centre. If the material of this bank were replaced upon the masonry it would give a wall at least six feet high, not reckoning stones which may have been carried away, as at Urswick Stone Walls, for modern fence-building.

South of O, there is a gap of about ten feet which may represent an ancient gateway, and then the wall continues until it turns sharply westward to P, where the stone-work is 4 feet 9 inches thick. From this a party wall, 6 feet

6 inches thick at Q, runs to the central building. Immediately to south of this the wall's western side is lost in a high bank, apparently natural, from which it emerges, giving at R a thickness of 4 feet 8 inches. A little to southward there is a slight deflection in the line of the wall, to include a large boulder which it was probably easier to build in than to shift; but it turns sharply to the east before S, where the thickness is five feet, and then again makes an angle before reaching T, at which the wall is 5 feet 5 inches broad. Near T is a great boulder which may once have formed part of the wall, and the fence is well defined to the east of it until we come to another ten-foot gap, beyond which the wall forks. The southern fork soon loses its form, though it seems to connect the main garth with remains to the eastward; the northern fork also loses its sharply defined character of masonry, and a low bank curves round towards P, forming an irregular inclosure with a very large boulder (about 7 feet long and over 4 feet high) in the centre. It would be too fanciful to call this an Altar Stone; the enclosure is not in the nature of a temple of any kind, but apparently one of the usual garths or folds of a primitive homestead. But considering the approximate regularity of three parts of this structure (L O X), it is curious that the south-eastern part should be so unconventionally laid out. The character of the walling is kept up in the irregular eastern inclosures, and at U there is a fine piece of wall with great slabs on edge for facings, making the whole mass as much as 11 feet broad.

Returning to T and going south of west, after a slight gap or break in the fence, we come to the gateway V W, where a ten-foot wall on either side flanks an entrance 12 feet broad. At X the wall measures 8 feet in thickness, but at Y it is only 4 feet 5 inches, while the party wall at Z is fully 6 feet broad.

Two points in this fence-wall seem to suggest an imitation of Roman work. One is the rounding of the

corners at L, O, and X; though this may be only from a want of skill in building a salient angle, for at V and W the wall faces are not quoined, but carried round in a curve. The whole plan, though there are occasional angles, and the bonding at N is well managed, suggests a preference for curved lines. Indeed, the resemblance of the plan, especially near the gateway, to the trumpet shapes of "Late-Celtic" ornament is remarkable, and it is characteristic of these "British settlements." The other point which recalls Roman work is the style of building with wall faces of solid stone and a rubble core; but these builders did not course their faces. They seem to have picked granite boulders from the land, rolled them up and set them on edge in a double line, packed the space between with limestone fragments and small boulders—and then proceeded, in heightening the wall, to lay stones irregularly on the uneven edge so formed. A certain amount of hammer-dressing was given to the stones, but this is not seen in the fences so much as in the buildings which we have still to describe.

A point which differentiates this work from Roman building is the needless solidity of parts like the gateway as compared with the slighter curtain walls, and the want of regular military engineering shown in the south-eastern part of this main structure. But perhaps the original inclosure was fairly four-square, and the irregularity is caused by later addition as the settlement grew. It will be seen that the builders were not unskilled, and that the place was intended at first to be no ordinary homestead, but a stronghold worthy of its place on the Maiden Way.

THE SMALLER BUILDINGS.

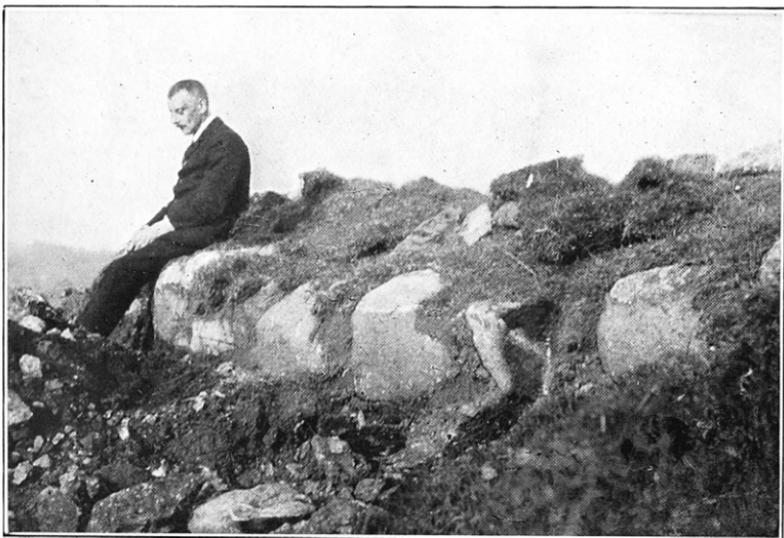
The gateway is flanked by hut-circles, of which there seem to be no less than eight or nine, in or connected with the solid stone-work forming the entrance. Beginning on the western side of the gateway, *a* is a kind of guard chamber, 12 feet 6 inches in diameter, with a floor

of limestone rock sloping to the door, and walls which have either lost their facing or were poorly built of small boulders. In this chamber many pieces of red sandstone slabs about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick were found. It opens into *b*, about 15 feet in diameter, and this into *c*, of the same dimensions. From *c* another door leads out into the open courtyard, so that *a*, *b*, and *c* form a suite of chambers, and in their north wall two other chambers, *d* and *e*, have been built.

East of the gateway is the chamber *f g h*, 13 feet 7 inches in diameter, well built, with a floor of limestone rock and a low seat, 18 inches broad, under the wall all round except at the doorway. At *f*, about one foot deep from the surface of the soil, was found a piece of glass, the fragment of a small dish, which when complete was about $2\frac{5}{16}$ inches in diameter and about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep. It is of clear glass, only slightly yellowish-green in colour, and apparently cast in a sand mould. At Corstopitum we noticed a fragment of Roman glass like this in colour and texture, but part of a vessel of different shape. At *g*, on the floor, was a fragment of grey Romano-British pottery, the neck of an ampulla; and at *h* was a part of the lip of a patera in dark brown ware.

At *i* is another hut-circle, 13 feet 6 inches in diameter, and the space *j* may perhaps represent one more; but we have a solid block of wall 15 feet thick between *f g h* and *i*, and the approach to *i* and *j* must originally have been through the passage, now partly blocked, between *k* and *s*, the gap south of *j* being probably not original, though the fence wall of the main inclosure is here curiously wanting in simplicity of plan.

The circle *k* is 16 feet 6 inches internal diameter, less well built than *f g h*, with a row of granite cobbles round side and a few to the east near the entrance, and one more on the south. It has no seat, and the floor is of sammel. No relics were found in it, though it was carefully excavated.



MASONRY OF EXTERIOR WALL-FACING ON THE NORTH-WEST,
GREAT CENTRAL BUILDING, EWE CLOSE.

TO FACE P. 363.

North of this is *l*, an isolated hut-circle of 15 feet internal diameter, next door to the west ; this was not dug.

The limestone edges, between this and *m*, may be the result of digging limestone since the settlement was inhabited. At the eastern end of Ewe Close there is a limekiln and quarry.

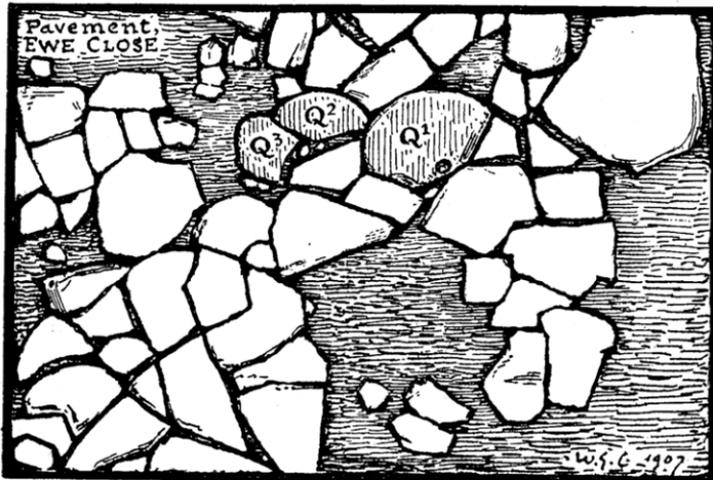
The small irregular inclosure *m* is bounded on the north by a particularly strong bit of walling which ends in *z*, but the crooked banks which continue this wall are slight, and were not dug. At *n* is another semi-circular nook, like *d* and *e*. The bank *o p* was not dug, nor was the circular shallow pit *q*, 25 feet in diameter. The inclosures *r*, *s*, *t*, *u*, are parts of another group of remains extending to the eastward ; these, with the round pit *v*, 26 feet 6 inches diameter, and the two hut-circles *w* and *x*, and the inclosure *y*, were also left for another opportunity, as the time allowed by circumstances for the exploration on this occasion was spent chiefly on the more important features of the site—the dike on the Maiden Way, the fence of the main inclosure, the gateway, and the great central circle.

THE CENTRAL CIRCULAR BUILDING.

A building which measures internally 51 feet 6 inches east and west and 48 feet north and south, with walls 8 feet 6 inches thick (on the south-west side) to 5 feet 7 inches (on the north-west), can hardly be called a "hut," although it resembles the hut-circles of British settlements in all except size. The great central hut at Urswick Stone Walls measures 28 feet internally (see these *Transactions*, N.S., vii., p. 85), and this is a great size for a dry-stone building, if it was roofed.

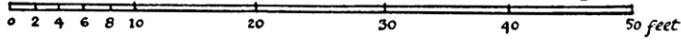
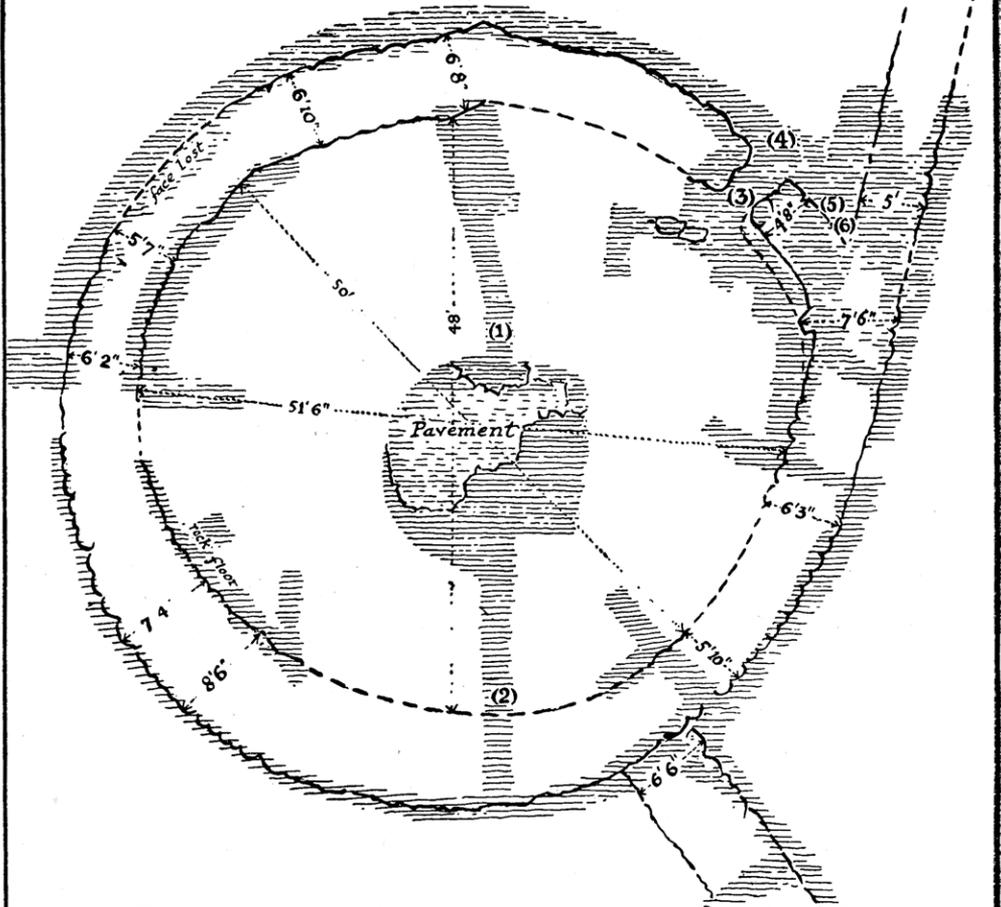
The walls of this building are more solidly built than the fence of the inclosure. The size and style of stonework can be seen from the photograph, which represents a part of the outside of the circle on the north-west side.

The dimensions of the wall are given on the plan of the "great central building," in which the horizontal shading indicates parts completely exposed by digging. The great granite cobbles of which the wall-facings are made have been roughly worked into hammered faces, but a certain amount of red sandstone, also found among the erratics on the moor, has been used, and on the north of the building, outside, we found a slab of sandstone which had been squared, not for use as a quern or a rubbing stone, but for some purpose unknown. In following the outside facing of the wall many bones of cows and teeth of sheep and horses were turned up, as also in the interior; these may be modern, and we did not observe any bones of other animals.



The interior of the building, roughly circular and averaging fifty feet diameter, had for its floor the native rock on the south-west side where the limestone happens to crop out; and where it falls away, towards the middle of the area, a pavement of flat flags has been made to replace it. A portion of this pavement, measuring five by seven feet, is given in detail in the figure, of which the

Great central building, Ewe Close

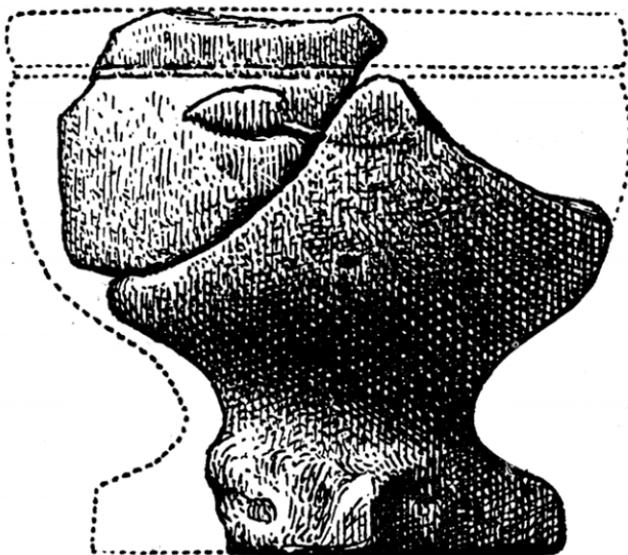


W.T.C mens. et dalt. 1907

scale is half-an-inch to a foot. The horizontal shading represents parts where the pavement has been lost. The three stones vertically shaded and marked Q are three fragments of a nether stone of a quern of the Roman type, with a radius of $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches and a thickness of 5 inches. The arrangement of the flagstones shows a certain amount of ingenuity and some approach to a kind of pattern, perhaps accidental, and yet curiously recalling the arrangement of lines on British coins (*e.g.* the coins figured in Rhys, *Celtic Britain*, opposite p. xiv.). Close to this pavement lay a bit of chert, and at (1) at a depth of fifteen to eighteen inches from the surface, and nearly a foot below the pavement level, there were pieces of cannel coal lying in the sammel, which was not quite undisturbed. As the pavement was missing at this place there may have been previous digging; but the sammel was disturbed elsewhere below the level of the pavement, which perhaps was laid down after the building had already been inhabited for some time, as indeed is indicated by the use of a broken quern for paving. At (2), just inside the south wall, was the piece of the lip of a patera in black ware with slight incised broaching.

From the pavement in the centre there is a fall of about three feet to the doorway on the north-east. This doorway we found much knocked about, but there was a well-defined opening three feet broad in which, at (3), lay a bit of thin red pot. The solid wall at the doorway measured only 4 feet 8 inches thick, but it seems probable that the facing stones have been lost as far as the projecting stone where the thickness of the wall is marked as 7 feet 6 inches, and that the original face was along the broken line from the door to this point. Uncertain traces of pavement were found in the doorway, and just outside at (4) were found the foot and lip of a red unglazed pot about $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches high (see illustration, p. 368) with a leaf pattern under a band, resembling an example in the "Samian case," Romano-British room, Carlisle Museum;

a thin bit of buff pottery; the foot of a red mortarium, and a piece of black pot.



The junction of the party wall (running from N in the general plan) with the great central building was much ruined, but seems to have been bonded. In the angle, at (5), were three fragments of a thin grey bowl; and at (6) were a number of relics:—a piece of red ironstone; the carved lip of a Romano-British urn, Upchurch ware, with a fragment apparently of the same; a morsel of red pottery $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick, and another $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick; and part of a Romano-British mortarium in solid buff pottery, resembling an example at Carlisle, Fisher Collection, No. 34. These comparisons with specimens at Tullie House were made with the kind help of Mr. L. E. Hope, the curator, and serve to throw light on the date of this remarkable site. Speculations on the possible use and nature of a building unique—so far as our present knowledge goes—in our district would be out of place until further examination of this and the neighbouring sites has given us all the data we can obtain from exploration.