

ART. XXII.—*Hut-Circles at Greendale.* By W. G. COLLINGWOOD.

*Read at the site, September 14th, 1927.*

REMAINS of round stone huts of the 'British settlement' type have been known here, ever since the late J. Clifton Ward, F.G.S., reported upon them to our Society's meeting at Whitehaven on December 11th, 1877. Mr. Clifton Ward, afterwards vicar of Rydal (died 1880, aged 37), was then on H.M. Geological Survey, but took notice of more than the minerals which were his chief object. He gave us the first archæological survey of Cumberland, which, though sketchy, is valuable as the accurate record of a scientific observer. His brief account (our *Transactions*, O.S., iii, 250), says, "just east of Greendale the ground is covered with a number of cairns, and there seems to be at least one case in which some of the arched and half-sunken walls are yet preserved." By this it appears that fifty years ago the ruin of one beehive hut at least was visible.

Dr. C. A. Parker mentioned the site in his "Gosforth District," and it is named in the Inventory (*Trans.* N.S., xxiii, 265) as 'hut-ruins?' None of us had the enterprise to examine it with the spade until Miss Fair reported, early in this year, that the stone-heaps had been used for making the road; and the steed being stolen, we set about locking the stable door.

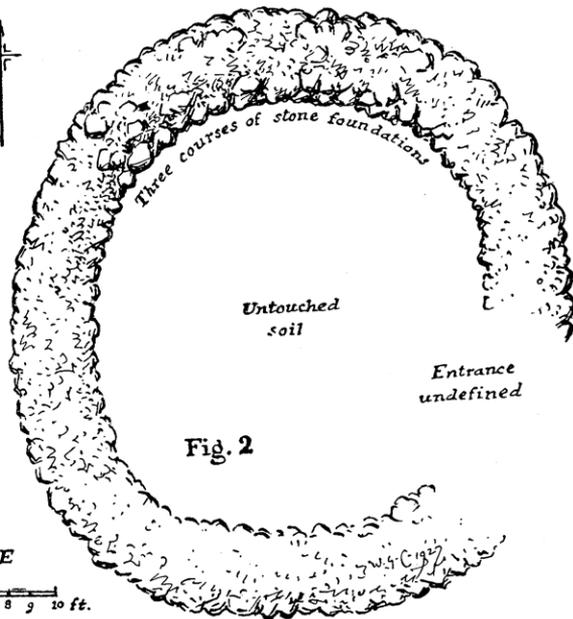
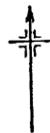
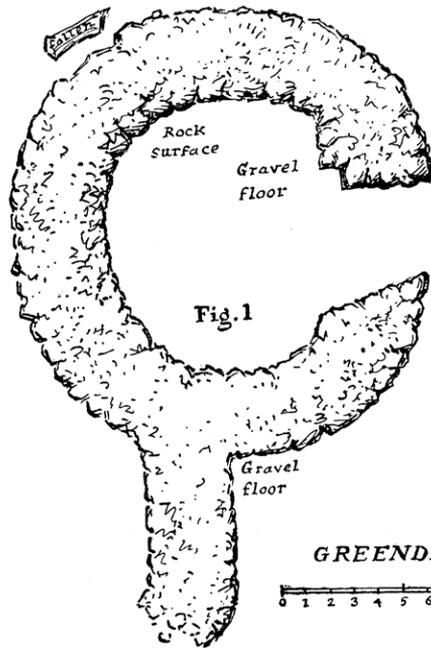
Lord Leconfield and his agents, and Mr. Harry Tyson of Greendale, very readily gave permission, and we set to work on August 30th, 1927, for three days. The digging party was Mrs. Hesketh Hodgson, Miss K. S. Hodgson and Mr. F. Lancaster, Miss Fair and Miss Hill, The Rev. R. B. Luard-Selby and Mr. J. F. Gibbons, M.A., F.R.G.S., of

Ambleside, Mr. Bruce L. Thompson and the writer. We exposed two hut-circles and a square building; we also made trials at several stone-heaps with a negative result. Enough was done to justify Clifton Ward's report, and enough is left for further explorers.

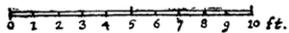
Greendale is on the north side of Wastwater, in full view of Scafell and the Screes. The site of the huts lies about 260 to 280 feet above sea, on the sloping fan or delta of stony soil brought down anciently by the torrent from Greendale tarn. In this respect the ground is like that of Lanthwaite Green 'British Settlement' (*Trans. N.S.*, xxiv, 117), except that here the surface is thick with short bracken which prevents the finding of relics (if any) unless a large area were dug over. No relics are known. A flint arrowhead from the Screes opposite may perhaps be associated with the site, though even that would not give a date. In this respect Greendale is still less fruitful (so far) than the Threlkeld site (*Trans. N.S.*, ii, 50; iii, 407), where querns and a holed stone were found.

At about the middle of the delta, between a slack on the west and a sike on the east, where the stony soil is dry and the gentle slope affords natural drainage, is the hut of which a sketch-plan is given as Fig. 1. It measures about 18 ft. in external diameter; the wall is 3 ft. 6 in. to 4 ft. thick, and the interior (neglecting the doorway) is 12 ft. diameter. The door is to the east, widely splayed inwards, with an opening of 40 inches on the outside. The wall is of small stones; probably the larger are gone, for one rather long and well-shaped stone lies on the N.W., evidently fallen.

In order to mark the shape, we piled the loose stones on the ring, as any subsequent explorer will easily see. The floor was of small pebbles and gravel, trodden in and discoloured to a depth of 3 to 4 inches, with a bit of rock surface coming up at the north. There was no trace of a fire-place or of store-pits; indeed the whole hut was too small for any such feature to be expected.



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From the S.S.W. outer face a spur of similar walling projects, and in the angle between that and the south of the hut the ground was trodden like the floor inside. We did not follow the spur, but it may be compared with the plan of remains at Scrow Moss, Coniston (described and planned by Mr. H. S. Cowper in *Archæologia*, vol. 53), where a fence encloses an irregular garth adjoining the hut.

Now the Scrow Moss site differs chiefly by its poverty from the normal 'British Settlement,' such as Urswick Stone Walls, which can be dated to about 100 B.C. (*Trans. N.S.*, vii, 99) or Ewe Close which by the Roman pottery (*Trans. N.S.*, ix, 306 ff.) was in use in the second century after Christ. It is a minor example of the same style of building, and its position in a secluded nook of the fells suggests that it is comparatively late. Indeed there is no definite lower limit of date to hut-circles, for some are quite modern when they are found in the woods, deserted by charcoal-burners. Consequently we must be careful in offering a date unless relics are found; but we may say, in general, that buildings of the British type in the dales of the higher mountains are likely to be later than those on more accessible and hospitable ground in the lowlands. Natives carrying on the British tradition were probably driven into the high fell-dales when the low country was taken up by immigrant Angles or Norse, or served the newcomers as swineherds and shepherds in the higher pastures. To some such period, dark in our history and therefore the more interesting, we may attribute, provisionally, this site.

The other hut we explored (Fig. 2) is about 100 yards to the south, near the modern road. It has been robbed of its stones except those beneath the present surface. They seem to have formed three courses of foundation and in one case (shown in the photograph, Fig. 3) there was a trace of the inward batter apparently observed by Clifton Ward, making the beehive hut. The floor is gone; the soil is all virgin earth to the depth of a couple of feet



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FIG. 3.—The inside of the N. part of the lower circle.

*Photo. by J. F. Gibbons, Sept. 1, 1927.*

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in the centre. The external diameter is from 25 to 25½ feet; the wall is rather less than 4 feet thick (these rude structures do not lend themselves to very accurate measurement), leaving an internal area of 17 feet diameter. The door seems to have been to the south-east. That this, though greatly ruined, was a hut and not a clearing-heap, is shown by its emptiness in the centre, while the walls are well marked below the surface. If it had been an interment-cairn there would be disturbance of the soil; and if a peat-stack bottom we should have seen peaty matter in and around it. It is known that many cartloads of stones have been taken off the site to make the road that skirts it.

On the east, near a little artificial pool in the sike below the rocky hummock with a rowan-tree, there is some appearance of a rampart in which there seemed to be a hut or a nook. But this, on digging, showed nothing very definite, and it may be a bank washed up by the stream in spate; although such a natural bank may have been used as part of the fence to the settlement. Indeed, from this point upwards and northwards there are hints of a rampart, which turns eastward and runs, about 80 yards north of the central hut, fairly distinct as the footing of a stone wall or dyke six feet wide. It seems to turn south and to continue along the edge of the slack to the west, already noticed, but if it even was a solid rampart it is now so ruined that it hardly tempts digging. Outside this supposed rampart, and to north, are 'cairns' and the semblance of a circle; trials with the spade made it evident that they were accidental groups of stones.

Towards the foot of the slope and above the road are several lines which might represent the southern trail of the rampart, but this part has been well cleared of stones for road-making. There are however two places where remains are visible of a different kind and probably of a different age from the hut-circles.

About 12 yards to west of the lower hut are foundations of building with square corners; and 100 yards further west is the foundation of an oblong building or enclosure, all of massive stones, and with a big stone lying apparently useless within the walls. The plan is not carefully squared, but measures roughly 13 yards on the west, 11 yards on the north, 12 on the east and 9 on the south, with a party-wall running E. and W. about roft. from the north side.

The occurrence of round and square huts together at Towtop Kirk, Bampton (these *Trans.*, N.S., iii, 265), suggests a transition from a primitive type to a later; but this at Greendale may have nothing to do with the hut-circles. It may be suggested that it was connected with a farm which preceded the present homestead: but as to its date we can say nothing until we have made much more exploration of our fell-side remains. And this ought not to be delayed until they have been carted away to build bungalows and motor-roads.