

ART. XIV.—*Castle Folds, by Great Asby.* By I. A. RICHMOND, M.A., F.S.A.

CASTLESTEADS, or Castle Folds, is a fortified knoll at the desolate head of the Great Asby valley, overlooked by High Pike (1220 ft.) to south and Great Asby Scar to north, and closed by The Knott (1352 ft.) on the west. The main view is east, to Hilton Gill and the Eden, with a subsidiary northward view over the saddle to Bankmoor and Gaythorn road end. The sides and floor of the valley are formed by tilted and ruptured limestone beds, covered here and there with patches of coarse grass or moss. The rock looks as if newly-slaked, fissured and pocked by rain and frost, but seeming all quick below and unsafe to tread. Actually, it is hard and slippery, dangerous to cross even slowly. Interesting plants grow in the crevices and the writer saw there a pole-cat.

The knoll (fig. 1) is a little table-land, forced up through the valley-floor with an even northward tilt, terminating abruptly on north and west and gradually elsewhere. It has been fortified on all sides by dry walling of limestone slabs, now pushed over the crags or lying in a confused heap on the flatter sides. Just enough remains to show that the mass was once contained as rubble between two parallel lines of orthostatic blocks, eight to nine feet apart, fixed firmly in the rock crevices. The original height is difficult to estimate, because the proportion of the parapet is unknown. But the amount of material fallen equals that *in situ*, and the orthostats suggest something not a great deal higher than themselves, since they are not easily reconciled with other modes of construction. They now range as high as three feet six inches, and suggest a

wall nine or ten feet high, with a parapet on top, giving a total height of some thirteen feet (fig. 2). This is not a great work, but its scale matches that of a standard Roman dry-stone *vallum* for temporary use (*de mun. castr.*, 50). There is one gate, on the south side, opposite a narrow gap in the rock-formation, which looks as if it had been artificially improved.

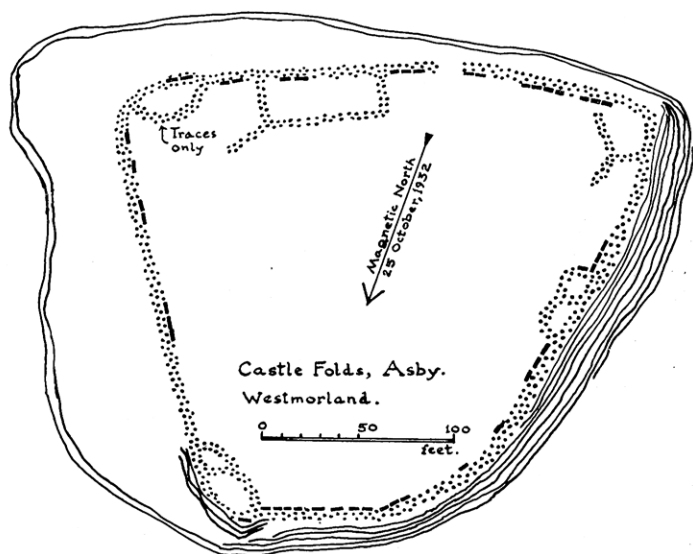


FIG. I.

Other features a little like Roman work appear in the lay-out. The wall is built in straight sectors, linked either by very obtuse angles or by boldly rounded curves, very like the non-Roman earthwork on the north summit of Caermot, called the Battery (O.S. iii, 245). But the internal arrangements of Castlesteads are not Roman, for they consist of quadrangular or curved huts attached to the defensive wall, with traces of dividing-walls in the area between them. This brings the work into connexion with Ewe Close (N.S. viii, 355) and Yanwath (O.S. xii, 3)

or, more particularly, with Hugill (*Ibid.*, 7.) and Lanthwaite Green (N.S. xxiv, 119). Mr. R. G. Collingwood argues elsewhere in this volume that these sites date from the pre-Roman age; and accepting that view we may find in Castle Folds one of the *castella Brigantum* mentioned by Juvenal (xiv, 196).

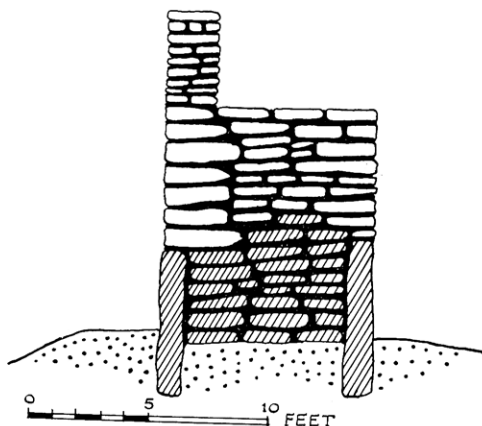


FIG. 2.

Typical section of defensive wall at Castlefolds,
with fallen stones removed and remaining
masonry shaded.

The inaccessibility of the place, and the barren character of the surrounding land, have combined to leave the plateau much as it always must have been. The defences which surround it have been deliberately wrecked by tearing out the orthostatic slabs which bound the base of the wall firmly together, and the fact that this has been done much more frequently at the outside of the wall than at the inside, suggests destruction rather than stone robbing, because stone robbers could handle the material much better from inside. It is worth noting that the technique of using orthostats appears in the same district at Ewe Close, as was noted when the digging was done. But it is clear that the simple style may have been used for a

long time: and Castle Folds is notable, not for purposes of dating the type, but for the evidence which it provides for its original aspect. Relics from the site are not recorded, and the author, scratching about, found none. The rock is so bare, that it seems unlikely that any are now *in situ*. But there is a large patch of grass-covered rain-washed soil in the pocket at the back of the north rampart, which would be worth examination.

To complete the notice, we append the two important previous notices of the site. The first is by Nicolson and Burn (*History of Westmorland*, i, 491), probably due to autopsy by Burn, who was Vicar of Orton and Chancellor of the Diocese. The inaccessibility of the site is noted, and it is then observed that the place was

“strongly walled about and contains an area of about an acre and a half: and at the highest corner there hath been a fort about seven yards square within, by way of shelter for the keepers and as a kind of citadel to retire to.”

The ‘fort’ or ‘citadel’ is the hut at the south-west angle, less well preserved to-day than the long rectangular hut.

This account is summarised by Whellan (*Hist. & Topogr. of C. & W.*, 763), who dissociates the enclosure and the fort, this being the source of the statement in the Monuments Inventory of *Transactions*, xxvi. Whellan also mentions, on the authority of a statement in a Kendal newspaper, “jewels of Petilius Cerealis,” found near at hand in 1847; these are the same as the torque and *fibula* found on Orton Scar in 1847, and we make no more reference to them now because we hope to trace them and publish them in another notice. They are post-Roman objects, of the age of the Cumbrian kingdom.

The next account is by the young John Bland, whose activities are noted in another article in this volume. According to him (*Vale of Lyvennet*, 19-20):

"Castlesteads . . . is an elevated plateau of rock, having a sloping level surface of about half an acre, covered with bent and moss. On nearly every side it presents an escarpment of rock from three to fifteen feet high: along the top of this has been a rude wall or barricade of stone to serve partly as a defence against attack Within it, on the south side are two oblong enclosures about twenty yards long by eight each, and on the north-west side is a large pile of stones as though it may have been a rude tower. This elevation is situated in a hollow and immediately all round it is an impassable plain of rocks and chasms. These are continued, more or less similar, for a mile or more on every side"

Contrary to his usual practice, John Bland did not make a plan of this enclosure. But his manuscript volume, preserved at Tullie House, contains a sketch of the north side, seen from the bottom of the little valley beyond it. An almost identical sketch by his uncle, Thomas Bland, was acquired recently by Tullie House, and is dated 1847. John Bland was writing his manuscript in 1863.