

ART. III.—*Ancient Pottery in Whinfell Parish.* By
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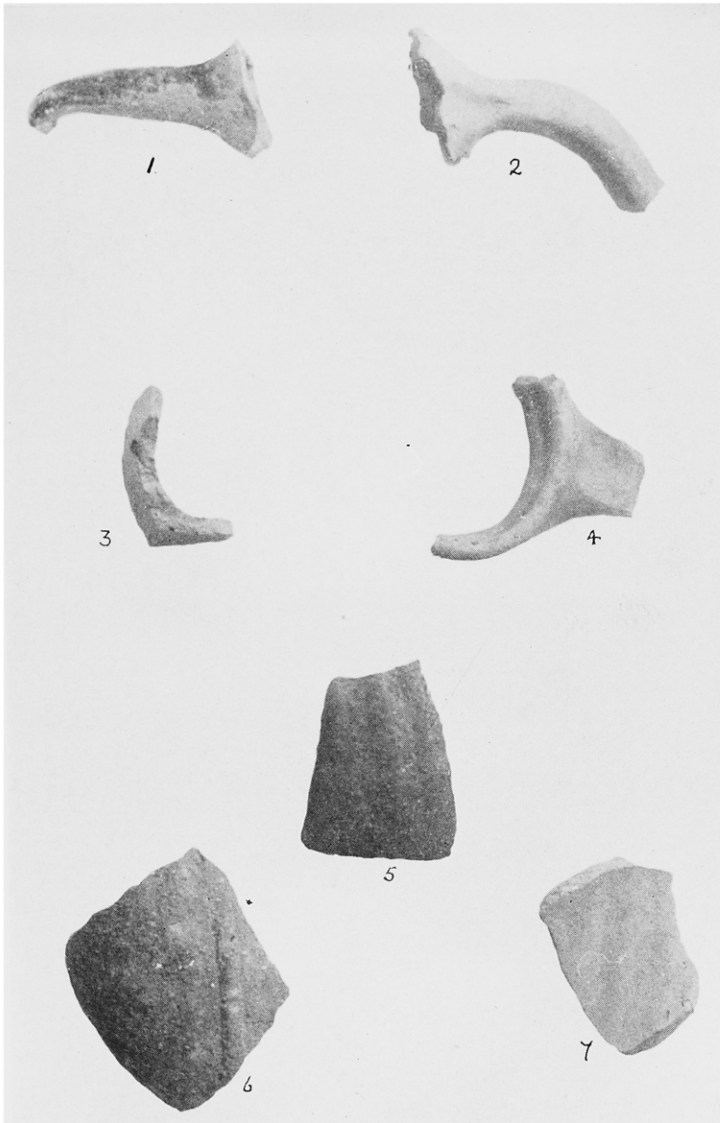
Read at Carlisle, June 19th, 1934.

THIS paper is not wholly concerned with pottery, in fact it is chiefly about other things. In the prehistoric quest upon which we are now engaged we, from time to time, come across things which may not be nearly so old as those for which we are searching, but which, perhaps, should be placed on record.

I called on Mr. John Harrison of Deanscales some time ago, to learn the further history of a certain stone celt which he exhibited to the Society on our last visit to Dean. On my way, passing through Eaglesfield, I remembered that I had once read in Bulmer's Directory of Cumberland (1901, p. 723) of a place near there called Endlaw. The termination law or low very often indicates the presence of a grave mound. And it was so in this case, for during the removal of the top soil, preparatory to quarrying the limestone below, human bones and teeth and engines of war were found. This burial may possibly date back to Viking times. The name was not to be found on the map and did not seem to be known in the neighbourhood, but when I explained the find and position, my friend said it would be Tyndalay, and showed me a notice in the local paper with that spelling, advertising the grazing there. Now the word Tyndalay is not very far removed from The Endlaw, or to abbreviate it, T'Endlaw, when both are pronounced in the local manner. On again referring to the 6 inch map, I found the name was there after all, but it had been further changed into Tendley Hill. This latter version

does not tell us anything. One would not suspect the presence of a grave mound from that spelling. We do not like to lose these old sites, but we are in a fair way of losing this one, owing to the triple change of spelling. But this is by the way.

Mr. Harrison gave me the details I required of the stone celt and went on to say that some old pottery had been found on the farm where he was brought up and which his father still farms—Birk Bank in the parish of Whinfell—and afterwards brought me a few samples. They seemed to be of 15th or 16th century manufacture, and Mr. Gray of Tullie House confirmed this dating. The field where the pots were found has always been called Potter's Close, but why such a name was given it, no one ever knew until one day the rabbits, in a fit of antiquarian zeal, unearthed the long-buried shards. Then the people realised why it had always been called the Potter's Field, or rather Potter's Close. The site is about 550 feet above sea level (6 inch map LIV, SE.). I could not find any trace of a kiln and excavation now would be difficult, for this N.W. corner of the field where the pottery was found is now thickly covered with trees and is called Potter's Close Wood. There are several sources of suitable clay in the immediate neighbourhood, and taking everything into consideration, I think this is an undoubted site of a medieval pottery. Possibly it was the dump of their unsuccessful efforts. I do not think it was the refuse from any household, for I cannot imagine the people of those days toiling up a steep hillside to get rid of their rubbish, when they could dispose of it much more easily downhill. Several of the shards are coated—some on the outside, others both inside and out—with a brownish-green and others with a yellowish-green glaze. On the other hand, some show no trace of glaze at all. These latter probably developed some defect before they reached the glazing stage and so were rejected.



MEDIEVAL POTTERY FROM BIRK BANK FARM,
PARISH OF WHINFELL.

Photo. by H. Valentine.

TO FACE P. 39.

DESCRIPTION OF SHARDS.

1. Horizontal handle, broad where it joined the cup, but tapered rapidly to a point which ended in a volute. Terra-cotta colour, covered with brownish-green glaze.
2. Upper part of handle ($1\frac{1}{4}$ ins. broad) and a portion of rim of vessel, the walls of which are only $\frac{3}{16}$ in. thick.
3. Part of base and walls ($\frac{3}{16}$ in. thick) of small vessel. Greyish buff. Unglazed.
4. Part of handle attached to section of rim of cup or pipkin which would be about 3 ins. diameter. Walls $\frac{3}{16}$ in. thick. Buff coloured. Unglazed.
- 5, 6, 7. Pieces of wheel-turned vessels ($\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick). Varying shades of buff and coated with greenish glaze.

SITE OF BLOOMERY.

Then I was taken to the site of an old bloomery. It is on the 400 ft. contour line and about $\frac{1}{3}$ of a mile W. by N. of Potter's Close Wood (6 in. map, LIV, S.E.). It is situated astride a small stream which divides the Birk Bank farmland from the Wood Farm estate. On the Wood Farm side is an open field, on the Birk Bank side a dense wood. In the stream and on the banks were many pieces of heavy slag, imperfectly smelted; and in the wood were plentiful traces of iron ore. It was of the soft greasy kind and until the matted tree roots prevented digging, Mr. Harrison always used it for marking his sheep. Unfortunately we did not find the furnace. It may have been destroyed when the wood was planted or obliterated by the plough. This find of a pottery and a bloomery on the same estate and quite near to each other is very similar to the one reported by Mr. Anthony Moorhouse in Whittington Parish, Kirkby Lonsdale (N.S., xi, 385), and the design of the shards in almost identical, though, I think, the Birk Bank ones are not quite so decorative.

My thanks are due to Messrs Harrison for these details and for their kindly Cumbrian welcome to Birk Bank.

EARTHEN ENCLOSURE ON LOW FELL, LOWESWATER.

As I have stated the pottery was found on Whinfell which is the northern end of a little range of hills shutting in the Lorton valley on the west. The southern end runs down to the village of Kirkstile and is here called Low Fell. On the eastern slope of this fell directly opposite the Scale Hill Hotel and at about the 800 ft. contour level is a rather curious earthen enclosure 59 ft. square. The enclosing embankments, which face the cardinal points of the compass, are from 3 ft. to 5 ft. wide and are very much worn down though still some 18 ins. in height. For whatever purpose this was made there would probably be a palisade along the top of the mounds. There are ditches both on the inner and outer sides of the embankment from which the soil has been taken to form the mounds. There is a solitary Scots fir of goodly size just within the enclosure, which helps to locate the position. I feel somewhat diffident in mentioning this place to you for it may be only an old sheepfold after all. But it is utterly different from our Lakeland ones—they are invariably made of stone, and surely there is no lack of that. But there are other earthen enclosures in this Loweswater-Crummock neighbourhood. As we stand in this little square, we can distinctly see at the mouth of the Mosedale Valley the ruined embankments of Kirkstead. (N.S., xxiv, 120). And on each side of the track leading from Crummock boat-landing to Scale Force are many other enclosures of various shapes and sizes. These are purely pastoral in character and many contain little hutments—some square, others circular or pear-shaped, for the shelter of the herdsmen. One remembers that the

word "scale" which has come down to us from the old Viking days, meant a shieling or hut. Did Scale Force get its name from these nearby huts? Did Scale Knott take its name from the huts at its very foot? I am very much inclined to think that they did, but I do not maintain that the huts were there before the mountain.