

ART. II.—*The Hill-fort on Carrock Fell.* By R. G.  
COLLINGWOOD.

*Read at Kendal, September 8th, 1937.*

CARROCK FELL is a mountain 2,174 feet high, 10 miles west of Penrith. It forms part of the eastern escarpment of Caldbeck Fells; westward it joins the main body of those fells with hardly any intervening descent, but eastward it falls very steeply (1,300 feet in half a mile) into the valley of the Caldew, which bends round it in such a way that the same river also forms its southern boundary. North of it lies the moderately deep valley of Carrock Beck. Thus situated, Carrock Fell dominates a wide tract of country to east and north, and its profile, with its tilted table-top shape, is conspicuous from almost every part of Inglewood Forest.

The hill-fort on its summit is by far the largest, as well as the most commandingly placed, in our district. It measures about 800 feet from E. to W., and about 370 from N. to S., and includes some five acres of ground. These dimensions place it among the major hill-forts of Britain. The acropolis of the Eildon Hill fort is not much larger; in fact very few Scottish forts exceed it in size. In the north of England only Ingleborough and Stanwick (which is not a hill-fort, though a similar work) are larger; and it is only in Wales and the south of England that works of larger dimensions are at all common. For purposes of comparison it may be observed that Tre'r Ceiri in Wales resembles Carrock Fell pretty closely in shape and size.

The summit of the fell is formed by a ridge running east and west. The highest point lies close to the western end of this ridge. It is a rocky knoll crowned by an Ordnance Survey cairn of the usual tall and thin shape. West of this the ground falls abruptly in rocky crags to a neck which unites Carrock Fell with the main mass of Caldbeck Fells. Eastward it descends more gradually in a series of steps to another neck beyond which it rises again in a smooth rounded knoll, on whose summit there stands a prehistoric barrow made of loose stones. This is oval in shape and measures 50 feet N. and S. by 40 feet E. and W. In its centre is a cist, orientated N.E. and S.W., which has been robbed. East of this, the ridge begins to descend, gently at first and then with increasing steepness, to the village of Mosedale in the Caldew valley.

The fort is of the "contour" type. The eastern half of its enceinte runs almost on a level round the end of the eastern knoll, though higher at the E. end than on the N. and S. sides. Both these sides, lowest where the fort is broadest, rise considerably towards the west, and the western end of the fort dominates all the rest from a considerable height.

The oldest account of this monument with which I am acquainted is that given by Hutchinson in his *History and Antiquities of Cumberland* (1794), vol. ii, pp. 381-7. A "bird's-eye view" and "ground plan" are given, without scale and with very little instruction to the reader; the fort is shown as a long ellipse on rough stony ground, with a tall obelisk-like cairn just inside either end. The description is long (too long to reprint here) and elaborate; it contains a great deal of excellent observation, as well as a certain number of errors and a good deal of speculative archæology in the fanciful style of the period. The following points may be noted.  
(1) The internal dimensions are given as 756 by 366 feet. The former measurement is very accurate; the latter

hardly less so, if taken where the fort is widest. (2) Hutchinson thinks that the rampart had been a mere stone-heap, never a built wall; here he is mistaken. (3) He thinks that the materials for it were collected from the surface inside its line. He is right in the main, but I think traces of quarrying are to be seen in a few places. (4) He thinks there are four gates facing the four points of the compass. That is a question to which I must return below. (5) He thinks that some gaps are due to stone-robbing or have been enlarged by the same cause. (6) He describes the barrow, and describes it in terms which imply that it had already been opened before his time. (7) He also describes the western cairn, or a predecessor of the present one; most likely the latter.

The only other account of the site known to me is Clifton Ward's, in these *Trans. o.s.* iii, p. 246 and fig. 4 on plate 1 facing p. 242. The plan is quite perfunctory. It consists of a triple dotted line (triple, perhaps, as meant to indicate a bank and ditch, whereas in fact there is a stone wall and nowhere any trace of a ditch) describing a fairly regular oval measuring, so far as the small scale (six inches to a mile) permits one to conjecture, for no measurements are given, 790 feet by 450. A gap is shown in the north side and another in the south side. At the (narrower) western end the dotted lines are replaced by conventional rock-shading, to suggest that the rampart and ditch are here omitted. This again is untrue; the rampart is complete at this end, as reference to my plan will show. Inside the fort, the barrow is shown.

Clifton Ward's text runs as follows:—

On the summit of Carrock Fell, at a height of 2,173 feet, is a fine example of an ancient entrenched camp containing a large stone cairn near the eastern end. The blocks of stone, plentifully strewn upon the hill around, have been piled up to form a rude oval wall, but it is not easy to determine how many of the present breaks of this stony rampart were used originally as entrances, if indeed any were. At the western end the walls terminate upon

a natural rampart of steep rock. This must have been a very strong retreat in its time; on the south the fell is bounded by the deep valley of the Caldew; on the east it is steeply precipitous, and against the base of the fine crags, which extend about a mile northwards from Mosedale, the waters of old Mosedale Lake—now an extensive peat moss—must have washed, probably since the occupation of this district by man; on the north end, again, the ground descends rapidly towards Carrock Beck; and on the west alone is the Fell continuous with its neighbours.

The fact that this is at once the largest and the least known prehistoric fort in our district had long determined me to survey and describe it when opportunity should offer. Accordingly, while excavating King Arthur's Round Table, I chose a fine and windless Saturday and immediately on stopping work at midday drove to the foot of Carrock Fell and taking a plane-table, etc.,\* up the mountain made the accompanying plan (17 July 1937). The results can be best stated in the form of a description of the enceinte. For this purpose we will begin at the west gate and travel clockwise.

The west gate is ten feet wide and is a well-built structure in heavy masonry. It has no guard-rooms, and there is no evidence to show how the entrance was closed. North of this the rampart, sloping downhill as it recedes from the gateway, forms a massive bank of stones fallen in ruin both inwards and outwards, especially the latter. No face is visible, but the ruins are quite like those of other hill-fort ramparts where excavation has shown them to have consisted originally of dry-stone walls. At 80 feet from the gateway the rampart bends round eastward, and passes outside of and below a natural rock bastion which commands it. The question might be raised whether originally the wall had run along the edge

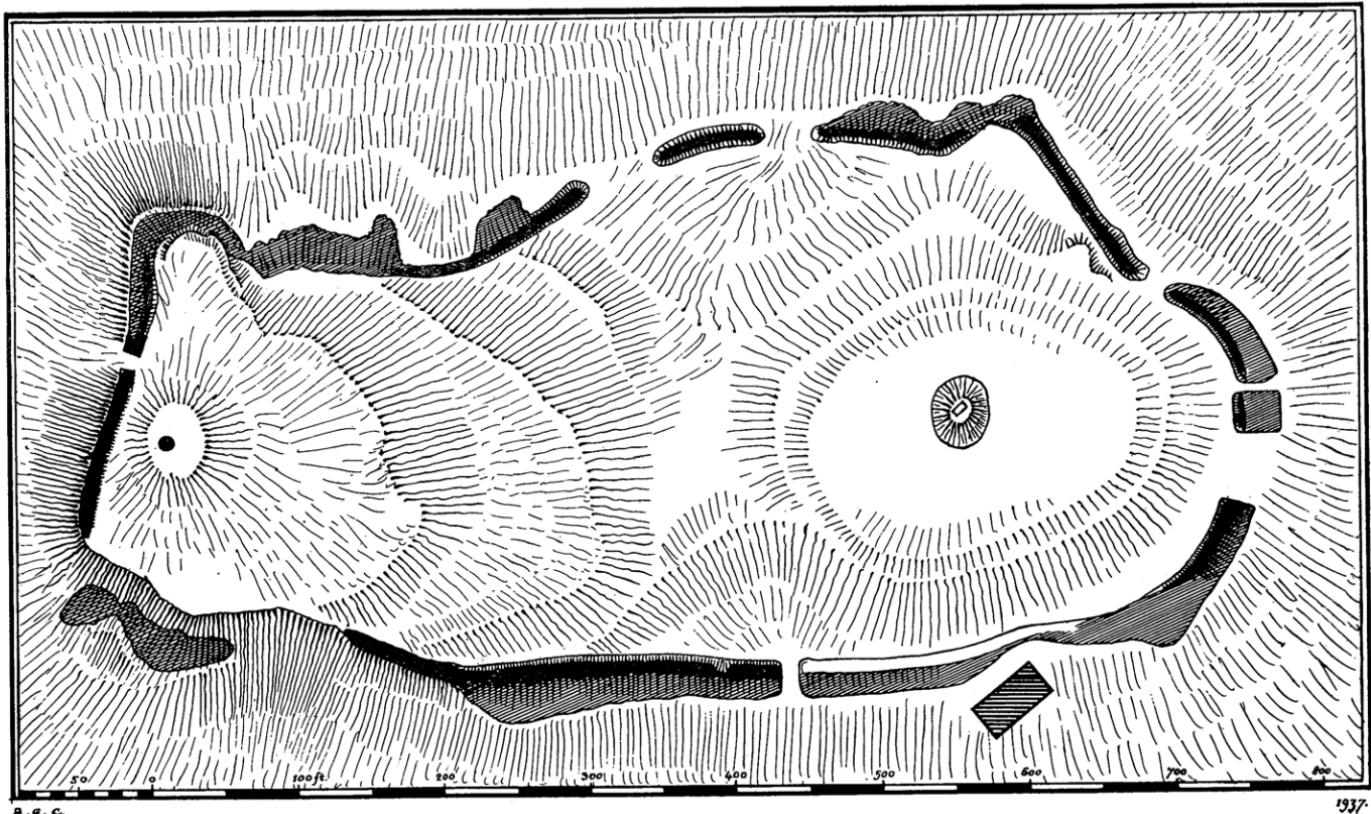
\* The equipment used was a plane-table 15 by 15 inches with ordinary alidade, a dozen arrows, 50 flags on 2-foot sticks, tape and prismatic compass. A camera was taken but was not used. A base-line was laid out passing through the two cairns and running the whole length of the fort; and in all 50 stations were triangulated. The orientation of my plan is true (not magnetic).

of this bastion and whether it had been pushed bodily over the edge when the fort was destroyed, as we shall see it was; but so far as this question admits of answer without excavation it must be answered in the negative, for the stones immediately north of the bastion look more like the remains of a wall ruined *in situ* than the materials of one thrown down from its summit.

For 150 feet from the bend, the rampart is very much ruined; but now it begins to stand up visibly as a built stone wall with visible facing on both sides about nine feet thick. Here, for a sector about 45 feet long, there is comparatively little fallen material. The rampart is here swerving downhill towards the E.N.E., as the fort begins to widen, taking advantage of the gentler ground; hitherto the slope immediately north of the rampart has been too steep and rugged to be included within it.

At 300 feet from the bend, the rampart, which is running downhill as a massive bank about five feet high, abruptly stops, to begin again after a gap (no. 1) of 55 feet. In this gap, some traces of the rampart's foundations are visible. Beyond it, an isolated sector of rampart 75 feet long is followed by another gap (no. 2) of 35 feet. The rampart now trends uphill again, and for about 150 feet takes the form of a massive bank with much débris on its downhill side; then, bending S.E., forms a still more massive bank with comparatively little débris, running uphill and commanded by a jutting rock on its inner side.

Another gap (no. 3) 16 feet wide is followed by an 80-foot sector of bank with a wide spread of débris outside it; then a fourth gap only six feet is followed by a similar sector, only 27 feet long. This is the eastern end of the fort. Gap no. 5 is 48 feet wide. Beyond this the rampart trends gradually to the west in a curve. For 75 feet its bank is well marked, with a wide spread of débris; after that for about 60 feet the bank is hardly visible, but the spread of débris attains a width of 40 feet. Then for



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190 feet the bank has been completely robbed away down to its footings in order to provide material for a now ruined shepherd's cottage just outside the rampart. The footings are visible as a belt of grass-grown stones. The spread of débris has been comparatively little robbed for this purpose; the best stones were presumably to be found in the lower part of the wall which was still *in situ* after the upper part had collapsed to form this spread.

We have now arrived at the south gate. This is 14 feet 6 inches wide; its plan and masonry are like those of the west gate. It leads to a good spring on the hillside not far away.

Westward from this gate, the rampart is well preserved as a bank of stones with a débris-spread outside it. At 150 feet west of the gate there seems to be a paved walk still preserved on the top of this bank; if this is so, excavation here would give the original height of the wall. About 220 feet from the gate the rampart climbs up a step in the ground, and here both inner and outer face begin to be visible and we reach a sector of well-preserved rampart 80 feet long and 13 feet wide. The wall, so far as one can see, is a perfectly simple piece of dry masonry; there was no doubt a stone parapet, but no other evidence of structural complications is visible.

At 300 feet from the gate the wall disappears, just as it begins to ascend another step in the ground. Once on the top of this step we are on the top of the western summit, with the ground falling precipitously to the south. A tumbled mass of débris lies at a considerable distance down this slope; and I am inclined to explain this (since I observed in it no evidence of structure) as the ruins of a wall that once stood on the southern edge of the summit. This sector, accordingly, I call gap no. 6. It is 190 feet wide, and ends only at the S.W. corner of the fort, whence the rampart, recommencing as a bank of stones, runs along the western edge of the summit for 120 feet to the west gate.

Inside the fort, except for what I think are traces of quarrying in a few places, and for the two cairns already noticed, there is nothing to remark. I looked everywhere for hut-circles and saw none. In this connexion it will be remembered that over 200 "tumuli," including both barrow-like mounds of stone and ring-mounds resembling hut-circles, have been observed in the valley of Carrock Beck and in the low ground immediately east of Carrock Fell ("Tumuli near Carrock Fell," by Dr. Mabel Barker, in these *Trans. N.S.* xxxiv, pp. 107-112). The possibility must be reckoned with, that these remains include those of the settlement where dwelt the folk whose fortress of refuge stood on the hill-top.

The fort obviously belongs to the now familiar Early Iron Age series. It must be taken in connexion with the Iron Age objects enumerated in the present writer's article of 1932 ("Introduction to prehistory," *Trans. N.S.* xxxiii, p. 189) as demonstrating a certain infiltration of Iron Age culture into our district probably only a short time before the arrival of the Roman armies. At the Roman invasion, our district was a part of Brigantia; in other words it had been overrun and conquered by the warrior aristocracy of the Brigantes. Such a conquest would in many ways probably affect the life of the country very little; there would be little change in manners and customs, or in the dwellings and utensils of ordinary life; but one might reasonably expect that this westward expansion of the Brigantes would leave its mark on the country-side in the shape of fortresses planted here and there in such a way as to dominate the district around them. One, resembling that on Carrock Fell in certain ways, but larger and containing huts, stands on the summit of Ingleborough and presumably overlooks the road by which the invaders crossed the Pennine watershed. Carrock is another. In the bravado with which it lifts its ramparts against the sky on a hill-top evidently

chosen for its conspicuousness, it recalls not only Ingelborough but the well-known Iron Age forts of the south country. In the simplicity of its planning and structure and the absence of internal dwellings it seems to point away from the Romano-British hill-forts of Wales towards a pre-Roman date.

There is another feature which may provide dating evidence. I have referred to six gaps in the wall, beside two gateways. These gaps are curious features. At nos. 1 and 2, on the north, and 3, 4 and 5, on the east, there is no indication of any spoil-heaps derived from the demolished sectors, and on the other hand the fact that these northern and eastern sectors are the most easily accessible and assailable parts of the whole enceinte makes it impossible to believe that they were left uncompleted when the rest of the line had been elaborately fortified. A person ascending the fell from the direction of Carrock Beck is insensibly led by the slope of the ground to reach the enceinte precisely at gap no. 1; while one ascending by the ridge from Mosedale (this line is at present taken by a path) reaches it at no. 4 or 5. Except in the case of no 6, therefore, the gaps are situated at weak places; that is, exactly where their existence would most damage the fort. It is impossible to explain them as the consequence of stone-robbing; the whole mountain is covered with loose stones of all sizes, and, except for the ruined cottage on the south, no structure exists for whose sake such robbing could have been done. Hutchinson is inclined to think them caused by persons light-heartedly rolling stones down the fell-side; for "it is not incurious," says he, "to see and hear them thus rolling and bounding along, with a perpetually increasing velocity." That is true; but persons indulging such a taste do not completely demolish certain sectors of a wall, leaving the rest untouched. Their depredations are more haphazard.

It is impossible, I think, to explain these gaps except as

the effect of "slighting" the fortification, or deliberately making it unserviceable. This would account for the placing of gaps where the rampart is most easily assailable, and for the removal of the demolished materials to some place from which they could not be easily brought back and re-erected, either by the method that Hutchinson describes or some other. The state of things at the south-west corner is possibly to be accounted for by a variant of the same explanation. This was the place where, as standing on the brink of a steep descent, the rampart was most easily to be demolished; although for the same reason its demolition was least destructive to the strength of the place.

The slighting was done by a victorious enemy, determined that the fortress should not be used again; and it never was so used. That is to say, the fall of this stronghold coincided with the fall of the power which held it. If I am right to connect it with the Brigantes, its capture and destruction must therefore have been the work of the Romans.

In conclusion, therefore, I suggest the possibility that the fort on Carrock Fell was the capital of a Brigantian sept occupying Cumberland or Cumberland and Westmorland; that it was built not long before the Roman invasion; and that it was stormed and ruined by the Romans when they conquered our district in the reign of Vespasian.