

ART. III.—*The Aughertree Fell enclosures.* By R. L. BELLHOUSE, B.Sc.

Read on the site, July 10th, 1964.

WE have to go back to CW1 vi to find anything more than a passing reference to the remains on Aughertree Fell (263380). This is rather strange; not only are the three "camps" and the solitary tumulus clearly marked on the Ordnance maps, but they are also easily found on the ground and the remains themselves are substantial. R. S. Ferguson used little more than a page for his description of the "circles" in CW1 vi 190 f., and we learn from him also that Joseph Robinson of Maryport had been there and opened the tumulus and had found . . . "no less than twelve urns of the usual British type". The year was 1881. (I have some of Robinson's photographic plates readily identifiable as views of the "camps", but unfortunately none showing the tumulus excavation. Ferguson adds (p. 191), "The urns will probably be exhibited when the (Royal Archaeological) Institute meets in Carlisle in 1882". His account is very brief; he labels the site Prehistoric because of the urns, and that seems to have been the end of the matter. I have walked over the area quite recently and I think there is more to be seen than appears at first sight; it merits close study and early excavation, especially when considered in the light of recent researches by Miss K. S. Hodgson and Mr Brian Blake in Cumberland and Mr R. A. C. Lowndes in Westmorland. Very briefly at this point I will only say that the largest "camp" here looks very like the Risehow site which yielded 4th-century Roman pottery (CW2 lix 1 f. and pl. xiv) and quote Mr Lowndes on the dangers of dating (CW2 lxiii 77 f. and 92); ". . . in the large area of Celtic fields at Grassing-

ton, West Riding, there are three tumuli within the field systems. Two of them proved to be of Iron Age; whereas one was Early Bronze Age, with a B Beaker Burial."

We have a field system here too; it is unquestionably related to the "camps" which themselves seem to be linked together within the system, so I propose in future to class them together as the Aughtertree Complex. I am sure we shall find that we have here on unenclosed land well preserved native villages, occupied during the Roman period and comparable with many others known elsewhere in Cumberland only from air-photography and chance finds, because of almost continuous cultivation since enclosure.

The Site.

The Aughtertree Complex comprises three nearly circular "camps", a tumulus (there may be others), a field system and some tracks. When the air is clear and the light is right a surprising amount of detail can be seen from the Sandale road by the farm of Newlands, but the ideal vantage point for proper study would be from the air. The Aughtertree Complex lies in an area of moor one mile north-east from Udale, rising in places to about the 1,000-ft. contour. The "camps" lie on a wide northern-facing slope roughly in a line east to west between the 850-ft. and 900-ft. contours. I will label them A, B and C, from west to east. Camp A is circular, encloses four-tenths of an acre within the inner bank and its centre is 770 ft. from the centre of Camp B which is nearly square and encloses slightly more ground, five-tenths of an acre. Camp C is the largest, eight-tenths of an acre and 570 ft. from B. It is an irregular oval. All show similar defences, an impressive ring ditch with banks on inner and outer lips and apparently single entrances towards the south-east.

The most convenient approach is from the south, leaving the Caldbeck-Udale road a little to the west of the

turning to Longlands, at a point where there is a space for a car to draw off the road. A small but distinct bank ascends to the skyline; it skirts a bog, passes a shooting-butt near the summit and leads to the beginning of a sort of avenue which ends at the entrance of Camp C. This is the bank we have been following; it has all the appearance of an ancient field-boundary and must be part of the Aughtertree Complex. The avenue is first clearly seen when approaching from this direction after crossing the second east-west trackway; it is formed of two parallel banks each about ten feet wide and eighteen inches high and sixty-three feet apart. Forty-five feet further on another east-west track crosses it; after a further thirty feet the west bank has the beginnings of a sizeable ditch on its east side; a comparable ditch begins on the east side of the east bank after a further fifty feet, and this is joined by another coming in at the side and associated with a bank which seems to form part of a series of small fields adjoining the avenue; five or more cross banks may be seen here, either indicating field boundaries or lynchets.

After a further ninety feet an inner bank develops on the east side of the west bank making the ditch more of a feature and about twelve feet wide. A further hundred feet brings us to Camp C and an obvious entrance. The avenue here is fifty feet wide and the ground slopes steeply to the gateway which is twelve feet wide. All the banks hereabouts show signs of revetment with stone. The Camp defences are impressive, especially on the south-west, the main feature being a ditch six feet deep and six feet wide at the bottom. However, its apparent great depth is due to inner and outer banks raising the lips of the ditch nearly three feet above ground level, their crests being quite sharp and about twenty feet apart. Stone showing through the turf in many places is clearly revetment. The gap in the west side looks like a second gate but may be a natural breach.

Completing the circuit of the defences the ditch is not so well seen on the north and east. Because of the slope of the ground the interior of the camp in the south-east quarter is below ground level and the banks and ditch appear as terraces above it, the outer bank is very small. Here, too, we may see the outlines of an annexe or croft adjoining the outer bank. The interior is very uneven. Traces of three or four narrow walls divide it into quadrants. The deeper hollows may be hut circles with their floors at different levels, i.e. stepped because of the slope of the ground.

Camp B nearby has exactly the same ditch and double bank and a clear gate in the east side. The featureless interior is a strange contrast after the bumps and hollows of Camp C. If it was made as a refuge for livestock rather than for human beings then the plain interior is explained but not the size of the ditch. A clear field-boundary may be seen at the north-west angle, it is another small bank with a ditch on its south side, continuing the line of the north outer bank towards Camp A.

Of the three camps, Camp A is the least remarkable except in that it is almost a perfect circle; ditches and banks as before and a gate in the east, but there are abundant signs of modern disturbance everywhere, apparently surface workings for limestone or building stone, and it seems likely that the camp itself was a source of easily won stone.

Finally, we come to the tumulus, four hundred and ten feet to the north-east of Camp A on the crown of a little knowe.

Perhaps more could be said, with greater accuracy, than I have attempted today in describing the main features of this interesting complex, but really, what we need now are not more and better word pictures, but plans, and above all, good air-photographs.

There is plenty of scope here for the keen field-worker because sheep-tracks, natural gulleys and modern sledge-

roads to the limestone outcrops all contribute their confusion to the original unclear plan and need to be identified and sorted out. And then, of course, excavation. I am sure that whoever takes on this long overdue research will be amply rewarded. I do not want to imply that Camp C, for instance, might be another Skara Brae on our own archaeological doorstep, but the scale of the remains makes me feel we may have a site which, when fully excavated and preserved, could be of great interest to visitors because of its accessibility.