

ART. II.—*A settlement on the Hawk, Broughton Mills.* By M. H. ORROM.

Read at Hexham, July 16th, 1971.

IN 1959 I was inspecting closely a small area of ground west of Appletreeworth on a hill called the Hawk, above Broughton Mills, in order to decide how it should best be afforested, when it became clear that there was an old settlement there, tucked into a hollow (Plate I). This site, which had not previously been recorded, is at SD 24049223. I contacted Miss Clare Fell, who examined the settlement and subsequently agreed to advise me and a team I got together to carry out a small excavation. At the same time Miss Fell got in touch with the Archaeology Branch of the Ordnance Survey, whose field team kindly surveyed the site (Fig. 1).

The site.

The settlement consists of an area 210 ft. by 140 ft. and is surrounded by a wall on the south-east, south-west and west sides. To the north higher ground and rocky outcrops form a natural boundary. The outer wall is five feet wide at the foundations, excluding collapsed stone. There are two internal walls which may have formed pens for domestic animals, in addition to at least five hut-circles, each with an entrance to the south-east, ranging in diameter from about fifteen feet to one of thirty-three feet, which we partially excavated. The rock ledge to the south-west gives good protection from the prevailing wind which blows up the valley from Broughton Mills. There are two entrances to the settlement, one to the west and the other to the south-east.

Two associated features are of great interest. The first is a tarn just above the settlement, about seventy yards up the slope to the north-east. This is today largely a sphagnum bog — white with the banners of cotton grass in June — but it does have clear water in the centre, especially in winter. This could no doubt have provided drinking water for the settlement as an

THE HAWK

N/G REF. SD 24049223

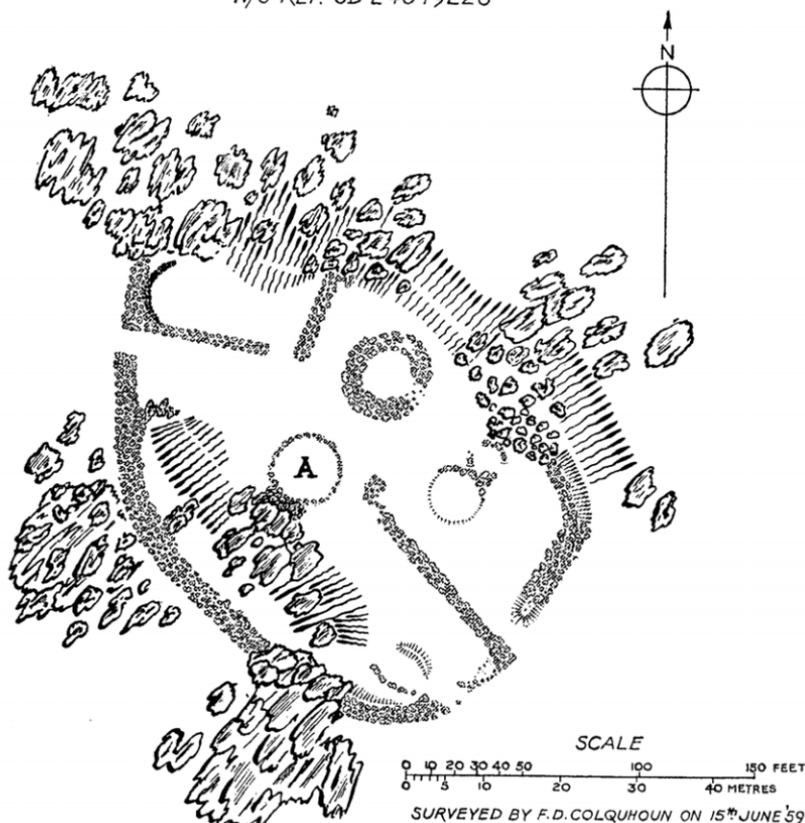


FIG. 1.

alternative to the Appletreeworth Beck, which lies a quarter of a mile away downhill to the south-east. It appears possible that the outflow of this tarn has been narrowed by placement of large stones at some time in the past. The second interesting feature is the level space outside the south-east entrance to the settlement, which lies just above the 600-ft. contour. This is served by a track which starts at a gate on the County road, and undoubtedly led to this area. It was probably used to carry away Coniston Limestone, which outcrops here, and has clearly been won from small pits dug into the hill, and also agricultural crops which may have been grown on this level space. Today this area carries fine grass, nettles, and bracken, but is cleared of stones, many of which are to be found in a slight bank which flanks the western edge of the area. It is well drained and has a fertile appearance and could well have been cropped for potatoes in relatively recent times, though it could equally have provided the settlement with an arable field about two thousand years ago.

The excavation.

In May 1959 the excavation started and continued at week-ends throughout that summer. It was decided to excavate one-half of the hut-circle lying beneath the rocky outcrop on the western side of the enclosure, marked A on Fig. 1. This hut was chosen since it has the most sheltered position and showed the most obvious wall structure before excavation, and also the largest internal diameter (Plate II).

It was believed that the floor of the hut, tucked in below the forward rock ledge, would have been built up by soil deposition and not eroded. This view was later found to be incorrect. After the turf had been stripped from the south-east half and bracken roots removed, a brown soil full of small stones was exposed.

Directly below this, the parent soil of yellow boulder-clay was revealed. We were forced to the conclusion that the stony layer represented the occupation level. As work proceeded a central open hearth was uncovered, the parent soil was baked hard and was breaking up in cubical fashion. The boulder-clay here showed a red colour. A secondary hearth was uncovered by the outer wall, north-east of the entrance. Here the inner facing of the wall was discoloured red and black and two small fragments of charcoal were found.

When stripped, the entrance at the south-east side of the hut appeared to be roughly paved, with a central narrow drain running out, resembling the entrance to a modern stable. In the wall to the west of the entrance a water-worn pebble, used as a pounder, was found.

The wall of the hut proved to be five feet thick and to be formed of two rings of large stones, with a rubble core. The inner facing, which stands two or three courses high, is built so that it gives a faced appearance. There was a good deal of fallen stone lying inside the hut when the excavation began, but not enough to suggest that the wall was originally much higher. It is possible that a turf and timber roof rested directly on the stone wall, as indicated in the reconstruction of huts at Round Pound, Kestor, Devon.¹ Indeed, it is difficult to imagine another course of stone marrying up well with the inner facing of the wall, since many of the stones are pointed in a vertical direction. No post-holes were found for certain, though there was a possible one in the entrance which might have held a door pivot. Their absence was disappointing, for, with a roof span of more than thirty feet, some timber supports are likely to have existed, either set in a ring within the wall, or as four central posts as found at Wolsty Hall, near Silloth.²

¹ *Proc. Prehistoric Soc.*, xx, part i, 87-102, figs. 5-7.

² CW2 lix 7-9.

The excavation was left at the end of 1959 with the half hut nearly finished, except for lifting the fallen part of the wall under the rock ledge. A small amount of work since then was confined to baring the main south-east entrance to the settlement, where a rough paving may be present. However, there is much fallen stone here off the strong outside wall and further work is necessary to establish this point. Since 1959 the trees have grown rapidly, making access difficult, though the enclosure itself has not been planted.

Conclusions.

No datable material was found, but the similarity of the settlement to others in Furness, notably Urswick Stone Walls,³ the homestead at Holme Bank, Urswick,⁴ and the settlement east of the Torver Beck,⁵ is apparent. Recent work in Northumberland by Mr G. Jobey has thrown light on Early Iron Age homesteads and on the stone-walled huts of native settlements, often contemporary with the Roman occupation there.⁶ The settlement on the Hawk probably belongs to the early centuries A.D., though an initial phase before the construction of the stone-walled huts cannot be ruled out.

I acknowledge, with grateful thanks, the assistance of Miss Clare Fell in the composition of this paper.

³ CW2 vii 72-94.

⁴ CW2 lxii 345-346.

⁵ *Archaeologia* liii 389 f.

⁶ AA4 xxxvii-xliv. Results summarised in G. Jobey, "Homesteads and Settlements of the Frontier Area", C.B.A. Research Report 7 (1966), edited by Charles Thomas, pp. 1-14.



PLATE I.—THE HAWK.

The settlement lies in the hollow in the centre foreground, its western wall on the steep hillock beyond. Taken from the north-east, looking south-west.



PLATE II.—THE HAWK, BROUGHTON MILLS.

Partially excavated hut circle 'A' in foreground, west wall of entrance and western entrance beyond. View looking west.