

ART. III. – *Results of Survey Work carried out in the Caldbeck Fells, Cumbria.*  
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**D**URING May 1986 field survey was undertaken by the author in the eastern Caldbeck Fells for the Cumbria and Lancashire Archaeological Unit, as part of the Lake District National Park Survey. The survey was conducted over an area of approximately 8 sq. km, previously identified by T. Clare (Cumbria County Archaeologist) as being one for which the existing archaeological record was inadequate.<sup>1</sup> It was carried out in conjunction with a study of mining and the monitoring of sites of Special Scientific Interest, being undertaken by the Lake District Special Planning Board. Work was funded by grants from the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission and the Lake District Special Planning Board. I should like to thank Ken Robinson, Edgar Craggs, and John Fletcher for their assistance in the field.

### **Methods**

The area was systematically field-walked to locate features of archaeological interest. A base station was established on the top of Carrock Fell, by triangulation (using High Pike, How Hill and Bowscale). Other stations were established on a closed traverse, and in one case, by resection. Detail was surveyed using an electronic distance meter, the results being processed on a portable Epson HX20 computer. Mapping was at 1:1,000. Descriptive detail was recorded on standard record sheets for later incorporation into the Cumbria Sites and Monuments Record. Field plans, archive drawings and survey data are held by the Cumbria and Lancashire Archaeological Unit.

### **Locality**

The area under examination consists of unenclosed fell between 220 m and 650 m OD. It is bounded to the north and east by relatively low lying enclosed land, to the west by higher fellside, and to the south by the Caldbeck/Mungrisdale parish boundary, which coincides with an area of lower, but steeply sloping fell. The northernmost limit of the area is wet and slightly boggy. Three streams, Carrock Beck, Blea Gill and Whitewell, cross the area, flowing approximately east to west. Along each of the streams there has been extensive mine-working (this is not included as part of the archaeological survey, see above) and in addition there is evidence of smaller-scale mining to the south in the Apronful of Stones/Black Moss area. There are also three large pits on Long Hill. To the north of the survey area, the upper reaches of Blea Wath flow approximately north-west. The road between Mosedale and Hesket Newmarket runs approximately north to south through the area, with a minor road running to the north-east. Several tracks run from the road on to the fellside – farm tracks essentially characterized by shorter vegetation, and more pronouncedly worn tracks leading up to the mining areas.

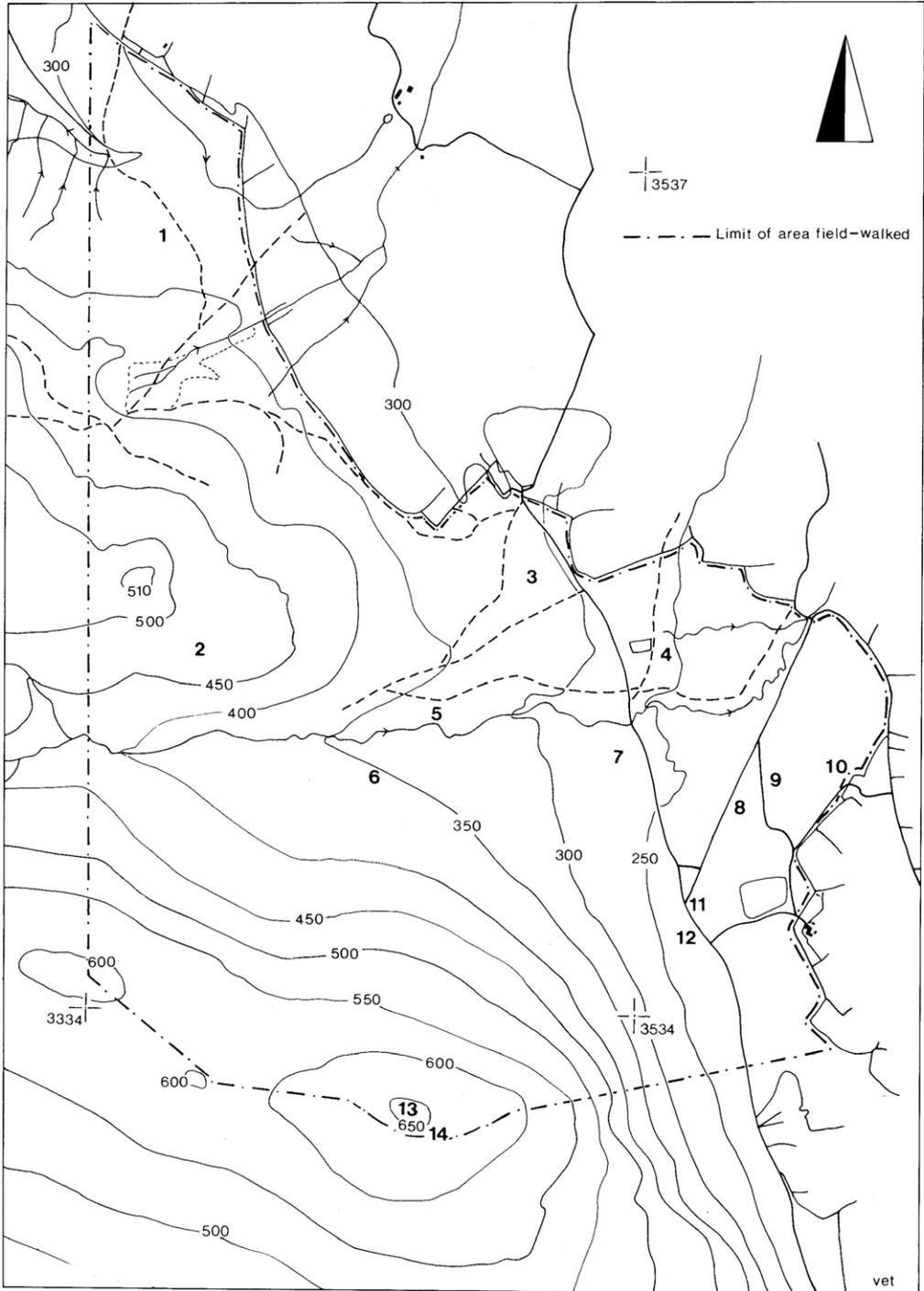


FIG. 1. - Map showing extent of area field-walked and positions of sites found.

## Results

One hundred and ninety monuments were mapped and recorded as 14 sites (Fig. 1). A site was deemed to comprise a geographically discrete group of features, regardless of period or function. The majority of features were round and long cairns, banks and lynchets. Carrock Fell hillfort also fell within the area of study.

*Site 1* (SMR 8394, centred NY 332368). A group of six round cairns, three of which are in a line, a fourth being just off it. Five of the cairns are small, with diameters of 2-4 m; the sixth has a diameter of 7.5 m and is irregularly robbed in the centre. The cairns are situated at between 320 m and 330 m OD, adjacent to a farm track. They lie in the centre of a relatively flat area, which was systematically field-walked but no other features were located.

*Site 2* (SMR 8393, NY 33433529). An isolated long cairn, situated on a rise, close to the top of Sunny Bank. Visibility from this point is good on three sides. There are no other archaeological features in the vicinity.

*Site 3* (SMR 8392, centred NY 3435). A cairnfield situated on Weasel Hills, on the most gently sloping and driest ground in the survey area. It continues to the east, across the modern road, but appears to change in character, and so this part has been treated separately (*Site 4*). The site comprises 60 round cairns, nine long cairns, 30 lengths of bank, two lynchets, two stone spreads, a possible hut-circle, the remains of a possible former grouse butt and two depressions. Some of the lengths of bank relate to each other, and it might be possible to construe the banks as field boundaries. A large horse-shoe shaped enclosure appears to be singularly devoid of archaeological features in its interior. Barker recorded 74 cairns in this area.<sup>1</sup>

*Site 4* (SMR 8390, centred NY 399354). A series of banks and lynchets, six round cairns, two possible enclosures, a hollow-way and two sub-circular depressions, (possibly the result of quarrying). Most of these features are subtle, although clearly visible in low, oblique sunlight. The most easterly cairn is situated prominently on a rise and stands 0.6 m high (diameter 9.2 m average). Some of the features are cut by a later enclosure, itself decayed, which has been ploughed internally, removing any trace of previous features. A farm track runs north to south through the area and may have cut the three linear features which now terminate at it. Barker recorded 42 cairns in this area, including three within the already-mentioned later enclosure, but no linear features.

*Site 5* (SMR 8391, centred NY 343351). Two well-defined round cairns standing 0.4-0.5 m high, in a prominent position on top of the northern bank of Carrock Beck. A mining track passes them to the north. The cairns are separated from the nearest features of *Site 3* by 20 to 30 m of ground apparently archaeologically sterile. Their prominent position reinforces the suggestion that they are not part of that complex.

*Site 6* (SMR 8388, centred NY 3434). A cairnfield containing 14 round cairns, five long cairns, ten linear features (nine of which have returns), and one triangular mound. It is situated in a curving band to the west (upslope) of site 8387, at the foot of the steeper area of the fell. One of the linear features exists as an L-shaped wall, built/rebuilt within an older feature which now remains as a low mound outside it. A more recent field lies

within the site, and is still in use with the addition of wire netting and corrugated iron. Barker recorded 42 cairns in this area.

*Site 7* (SMR 8387, centred NY 3434). A scattered group of five round cairns, a depression and several lengths of bank. Four of the cairns are in fair condition, and stand up to 0.5 m high, in fairly prominent positions. The banks are all aligned approximately east to west, but have no other relationship. The bank to the south changes alignment where it crosses the modern road. This may be coincidental or may indicate that it post-dates the road, although the road gives the appearance of cutting it. Barker records 13 cairns in this area.

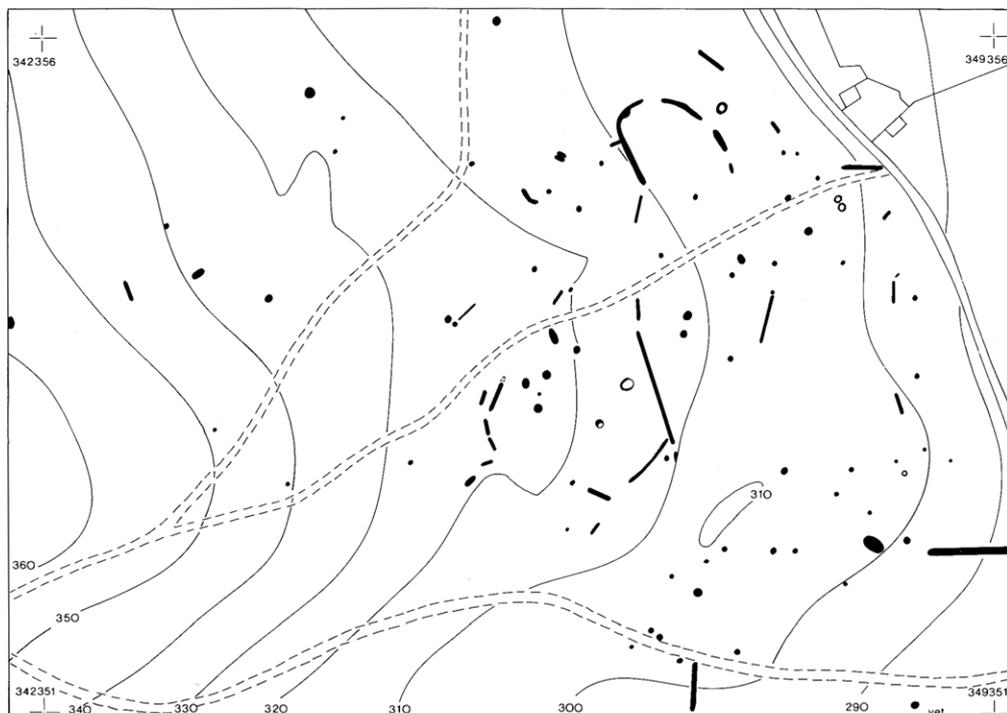


FIG. 2. - Site 3, Weasel Hills.

*Site 8* (SMR 9080, NY 3536234594). A single round cairn, with a hole in the centre, possibly the result of robbing. The cairn is situated approximately 8 m to the north of disused quarry pits, but is not necessarily associated.

*Site 9* (SMR 9081, centred NY 34753550). A curving, linear bank, running approximately north to south through an area of low-lying boggy ground and continuing northwards on drier ground.

*Site 10* (SMR 3766, centred NY 357348). Three round cairns situated on the edge of the unenclosed fell, close to a farm track. They are well-defined and in fair condition. A local resident suggested that they had been created during the last ten years, as a result

of wall-building. Barker records some cairns in this area, but it is not possible to identify these with any certainty.

*Site 11* (SMR 9079, centred NY 352344). Two round cairns situated on top of a slight rise in an area of otherwise fairly flat ground.

*Site 12* (SMR 8395, centred NY 354341). Three possible round cairns, situated close to two disused mine tips. They may result from mining activity.

*Site 13* (SMR 2973, centred on NY 34253365). The hillfort situated on the summit of Carrock Fell has been described by R. G. Collingwood.<sup>2</sup> It commands extensive views in all directions; the fellside drops away steeply on three sides, and more gently on the east, where the ridge continues. The hillfort is kidney shaped, following roughly the contours of the hill and in places is built over rock outcrops. The rampart now stands up to 1.8 m high, having a maximum width, including tumble, of 10 m. Internally the hillfort measures 235 m east to west, and approximately 100 m north to south. There are several breaks in the rampart, but it is not possible to locate an entrance with certainty and some of the breaks contain tumble. There are traces of quarrying within the enclosed area, and also two cairns, one at either end. Both give the appearance of being relatively recent; they are hollowed out, and form effective shelters for walkers, which was possibly their original function.

*Site 14* (SMR 8389, centred NY 34343358). A sub-rectangular structure, divided into three compartments, situated immediately below the south-east side of Carrock Fell hillfort. It was probably constructed of stones robbed from the hillfort rampart. It stands to a fairly uniform height of 1 m, with walls averaging 0.9 m wide. The doorway of the east compartment has been blocked, and the south wall projects to the south-west.

## Conclusions

It is possible that the area surveyed does not incorporate the limits of the archaeology in the vicinity and there is a danger in assuming that this is the case. However, examination of the area to the west from vertical air photographs and accompanying ground validation<sup>3</sup> suggests that there was only mining activity here; the topography to the south is not favourable to settlement, and land improvement to the north and east may have removed traces of earlier land use, although a "cup-shaped depression", identified as a possible hut site, is recorded to the north.<sup>4</sup> A bronze spearhead was found on land to the east.<sup>5</sup>

Without excavation it is difficult to comment upon the exact function of those cairns located during the survey, but it is probable that those standing in relative isolation or in pairs and having a prominent position in the landscape (Sites 2, 5, 8, 11 and those within Site 7) are funerary monuments. The three cairns at site 10 are very well-defined, and despite the suggestion of a recent date, it is possible that they may have served a similar purpose. The position of the three cairns at Site 12, as well as their poor survival (possibly due to a different method of construction), makes their interpretation as funerary monuments less attractive, and they may be the result of mining. The six cairns comprising Site 1 are unlikely to be funerary due to their size, position and number.

In the two areas where cairns are most extensive (Sites 3 and 6) they are to be found among the remains of banks (Sites 3 and 6), which could be contemporary. At Site 6

some of the cairns occur in rows which bear similar alignments to those of the banks. It is possible that some of these may in fact represent decayed banks although some of those which provide the best evidence for such an interpretation are well-defined and in fair condition, thus suggesting that their original nature is unchanged. A relationship is suggested between the cairn alignments and the walls, unless both relate to a further, as yet undefined factor. The banks, presumably former field boundaries, are very regular, appearing to define small parcels of land. There is no evidence of settlement remains in the immediately vicinity with which the field system might be associated. Site 3 is more extensive. Here many of the cairns are interspersed amongst the banks. There appears to be no tangible relationship between them although some of the banks do seem to form significant patterns.

A U-shaped enclosure, lying on relatively flat ground at the north end of Site 3, contains neither cairns nor other visible features but this does not preclude the possibility of internal structures which can only be detected by excavation or geophysical survey. The position of the enclosure would suggest that it was more likely to be used as a dwelling-place, if only of a very temporary nature, rather than having had a ritual or defensive significance. The open end of the enclosure faces south, towards the complex of cairns and banks. There may have been entrance gaps through the banks, although these may have occurred after the enclosure had gone out of use. To the south there is a possible hut-circle situated just upslope from a long length of bank; the two possible hut-circles to the east are probably the result of turf stripping. A possible lynchet may indicate the presence of arable farming.

Site 4 is an extension of Site 3, separated from it only by the modern road, but the site changes noticeably in character at this point, possibly as a result of differing subsequent land use. The banks and lynchets may have formed field boundaries, but the shapes of these fields cannot be fully determined, and there are no cairns in close association with them. A horse-shoe shaped enclosure (considerably smaller than the enclosure in Site 3) opens on the upslope side, and may have had some association with settlement, although there is no real evidence for this. One cairn may be interpreted as funerary on account of its prominence. The two circular depressions lying to the north of the site are likely to be the result of turf-stripping or superficial quarrying.

No pollen analysis has been undertaken in this area, and work carried out in the Langdales and in the south-west Lake District fells<sup>6</sup> relates to areas too distant to have any significance beyond the tentative inference of similar clearance phases (Bronze Age, "Brigantian", and Norse) in this area. The name "Caldbeck" is derived from the Norse; "kaldr" meaning cold, and "bekkr" meaning "stream",<sup>7</sup> implying that there may have been Norse settlement in the area, but this does not provide a date for the archaeological remains, which typologically are most likely to be of Bronze Age date.<sup>8</sup>

Whilst no distinct land-use patterns have emerged from this study, it can be seen that the cairnfields and banks are found on the least steep, and what is today the driest, area of the fell. This distribution would tie in with the traditional interpretation of cairnfields as resultant from land clearance. However, it is perhaps surprising that there is not more evidence of previous land-use at Hudscals (Site 1) where the land is relatively good. The only criterion for the siting of possible funerary cairns seems to have been that of prominence within the immediate landscape and it is of note that intervisibility does not appear to have been an essential factor.

The meandering bank comprising Site 9 may have been a trackway constructed across an area of damp ground. If this was the case, it would suggest either a wetter climate or a higher water-table than today, as the present boggy area could easily be avoided. The bank runs roughly parallel to the modern road, with an adjoining bank running in from the north-west.

The hillfort at Carrock Fell occupies the highest, most defensible point on the landscape, and is one of the largest hillforts in Northern England,<sup>9</sup> enclosing approximately 5 acres. The shape of the hillfort, particularly of the northern portion of the stone rampart, perhaps indicates two phases of building: the earliest at the western end, enclosing an area of approximately 80 × 60-70 m, incorporating the highest ground at the summit of the fell and a second phase of expansion towards the east, which may have been to allow stock to be brought into the enclosure.<sup>10</sup> Collingwood<sup>11</sup> suggests that this was a Brigantian capital built immediately prior to the Roman invasion of Cumberland, and that the gaps in the wall represent deliberate slighting by the Romans. Higham, however, argues that the lack of visible internal features and the remote and exposed nature of the site makes it probable that it was never permanently occupied.<sup>12</sup>

Another phase of land use is represented by the structure, possibly a sheiling, situated just below the hillfort. Although its size and structure would make it suitable for permanent habitation, this may not have been the case, both because it is in a fairly exposed position, and because it is, at most, an hour and a half walk from the much more hospitable, now enclosed land. The presence of blocked doorways would suggest a fairly long period of use or re-use. It could either be of medieval or post-medieval date.

The area which has been examined in this study is fairly self-contained, but it is hoped that further survey work, such as that currently being undertaken by the unit in the Cumbrian Uplands, will increase our understanding of such landscapes by adding to the information currently available. In addition, excavations may radically revise our views (such as those at Shap Blue Quarry, by V. E. Turner; and at Devoke Water, by A. C. H. Olivier *et al.*).

## Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Barker, "Tumuli near Carrock Fell", CW2, xxxiv, 107. It was suspected, and fieldwork showed, that upcast from mining and rock outcrops had been recorded as cairns.
- <sup>2</sup> R. G. Collingwood, "The hillfort on Carrock Fell", CW2, xxxviii, 32-41.
- <sup>3</sup> V. E. Turner, 1985 for Cumbria and Lancashire Archaeological Unit.
- <sup>4</sup> M. Barker, "Report of the Committee for Prehistoric Studies", CW2, xxxv, 174.
- <sup>5</sup> C. I. Fell, "Bronze Age connections between the Lake District and Ireland", CW2, xxxix, 123.
- <sup>6</sup> W. Pennington, (1965) "Pollen Analysis from the Deposits of Six Upland Tarns in the Lake District". *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, Series B 248, 205-44.
- <sup>7</sup> G. Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the North-West*, 75.
- <sup>8</sup> D. Walker, "Excavations at Barnscar, 1957-58", CW2, lxv, 53-65.
- <sup>9</sup> Collingwood, *op. cit.*
- <sup>10</sup> My thanks to C. Howard-Davis for drawing my attention to this.
- <sup>11</sup> Collingwood, *op. cit.*
- <sup>12</sup> N. Higham, *The Northern Counties to A.D. 1000*, (1986), 129.

