

ART. VII – *Excavation of Medieval settlement remains at Crosedale in Howgill*

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IN recent years fieldwork undertaken by members of the Sedbergh and District History Society has revealed a large number of previously undocumented sites in the western Howgill Fells (Cleasby 1991). Recent work by the RCHME in the Howgills considers the dating for most of the surviving earthwork remains to be uncertain, whilst conceding at least a likely medieval origin (Bowden 1996), but Cleasby drawing on evidence from the *Cockersand Chartulary* is more definite in ascribing a medieval date for the use of many of them (Cleasby 1991, 7). All recent commentators are agreed that excavation work is required to provide further data about, and a chronology for, these sites (Cleasby 1991, 7 and Bowden 1996).

In April 1994 the Society, with the help of the Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU), surveyed earthworks above Crosedale Beck on the southern flank of Nab Fell, near Howgill, Cumbria. The earthworks consisted of two small enclosures seemingly related to a series of banks and ditches, all now outside of the fell wall and situated on unenclosed fell side. One of these sites was a small sub-rectangular enclosure (B on Fig. 2), the possible remains of a small structure measuring 10 m x 7 m. The earthwork was thought to be a possible shieling. Visual surface examination indicated that the earthwork was formed by building foundations of unknown, but assumed to be medieval or post-medieval date. In order to discover more about this site and, therefore obliquely to shed light on other similar sites in the Howgills, Sedbergh and District History Society developed, in collaboration with LUAU, a proposal to excavate the site.

### **The project**

The purpose of the excavation was to establish, if possible, the nature, function and date of the enclosure.

In May 1995 the Society, supervised by LUAU, carried out the partial excavation of the small earthwork. Situated above the Crosedale Beck at OS reference SD 6475 9395, the site lay on gently sloping ground, close to the valley edge, c. 260 m above Ordnance Datum. The earthworks were aligned approximately north-south. Although just one of a number of similar sites, it was chosen for further investigation because it seemed to be representative of the group and was suffering as a result of interference from farming activities and from sheep-caused erosion.

The excavations revealed the foundation walls of a building and clearly indicated that the site had potential enough to warrant a further season of investigation to complete the excavation of its plan and to examine some of the structure's environs. The results of this initial investigation were published as an interim report in the *Sedbergh Historian* (Howard-Davis, *et al* 1996). In May and June 1996 the remaining part of the structure was excavated along with parts of its surroundings, and the excavation of the area explored in 1995 was completed down to natural deposits. An

assessment of the excavation results was compiled and published in the *Sedbergh Historian* (Hair and Newman 1998).

The assessment indicated that the site needed to be set in its historical, social and economic context in order for it to be better understood. In particular the medieval land-use of the area needed to be investigated. This was done subsequently by primarily investigating references to the vicinity contained in the *Cockersand Chartulary* (Farrar 1905), and by compiling evidence from the Society's own, mostly unpublished, documentary research.

### Excavation results by phase

At the outset of the excavation it was possible to divide the enclosure into three interrelating components. To the north an almost square earthwork measuring 6 m x 6 m was identified. This had a well defined rounded profile with 2 m wide banks,

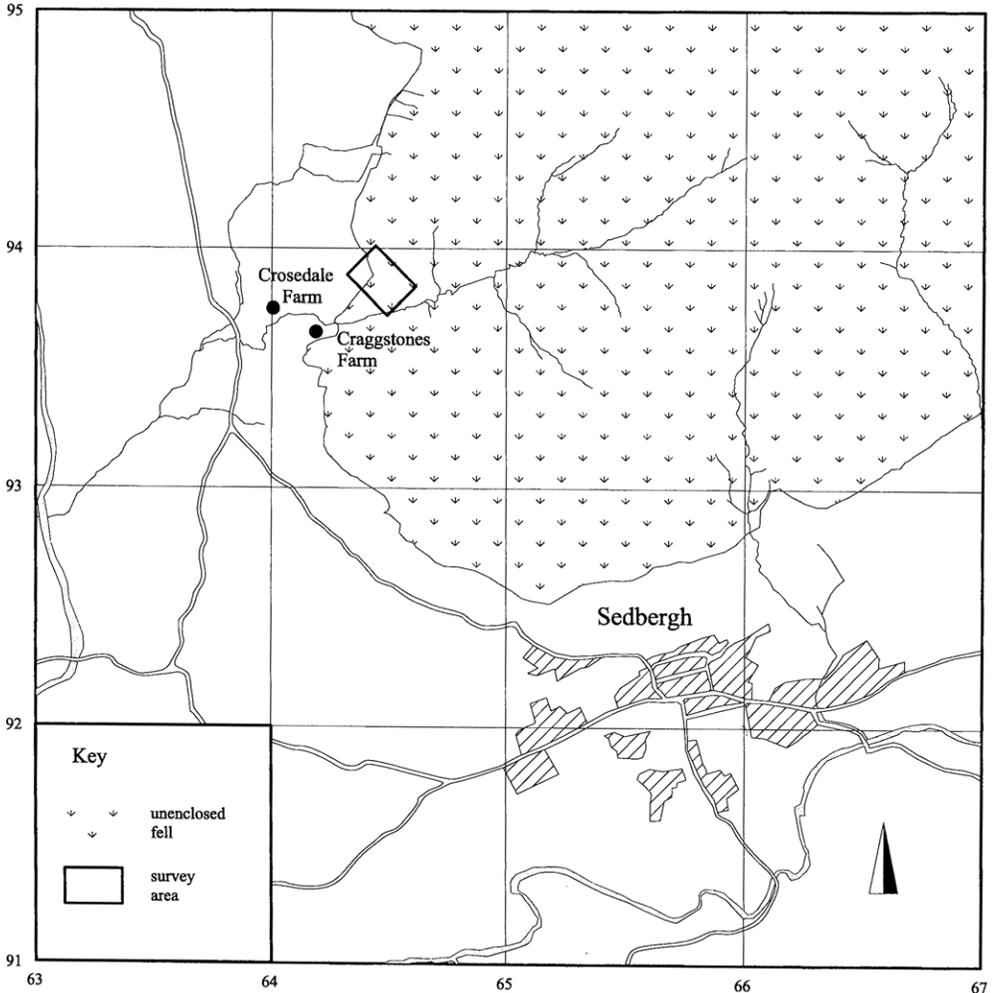


FIG. 1. Location of Project.

rising to a maximum elevation of 0.45 m, with locally flattened crests. A sub-rounded mound, measuring 7.50 m x 4.0 m was evident to the south of this feature. This was separated from the northern part of the structure by an east-west aligned shallow depression. These earthworks were stratigraphically investigated to the level of unmodified natural subsoil and were revealed to consist of walls and other structural components of the foundations of a building with related features. Time did not allow the removal of all structural elements, but sufficient information was retrieved to establish the structural nature and date of the site.

### *Phase 1: natural deposits*

The underlying solid geology within the study area comprises sedimentary rock laid down in the Silurian era (Taylor *et al* 1971). This is overlain by glacial drift deposits which date to the Devensian stage of the Quaternary era (*ibid*). The natural subsoil encountered during the excavation [023], comprised a sandy silty loam which varied in colour across the site from light orangey brown to cream and is considered to be a drift deposit of glacial origin. No enhancement of this relatively sterile soil matrix was noted and no human activity predating the construction of a building (the decayed remains of which formed the noted earthworks) was detected within the site.

### *Phase 2: construction and initial occupation (Fig. 3)*

The construction of a building on the site commenced with the creation of a level platform excavated into the natural slope of the hillside. The material excavated from the uphill, north-eastern end of the platform, a dark yellowish brown stony silty clay [012], was deposited at the south-western, downslope end to make a level area which formed the base of the building.

The hill slope above the north-eastern end of the platform was steep, having been enhanced by the excavation of material, thus in an apparent attempt to prevent soil movement a revetment [022] was placed part way across the slope. The revetment, made of unworked limestone rubble, was located in the eastern corner of the site and measured 1.80 m long by 0.15 m wide and was two courses in depth.

To the west of the building a small positive lynchet was investigated, which seemed to be contemporary with the creation of the platform and could be seen running north-westwards away from the structure. This was recorded as linear bank D in 1994 (Howard-Davis *et al* 1996, 5 and 12). The bank did not seem to abutt the building but terminated about 1 m to the west of it, nevertheless, it did appear to be contemporary with it.

Revealed upon the platform were the foundations of a building [007], measuring approximately 10 m x 5 m. It consisted of a dry-stone wall [010] at its north-eastern end, with the south-western end consisting of a revetted thrust of redeposited clay [012]. Wall [010] appeared to have been constructed directly on top of subsoil [023]. It was *c.* 0.65 m wide, stood to a maximum of two to three courses high, and was formed of rough unworked facing stones of Silurian limestone which were interlocked with a narrow rubble core of similar but smaller components. The

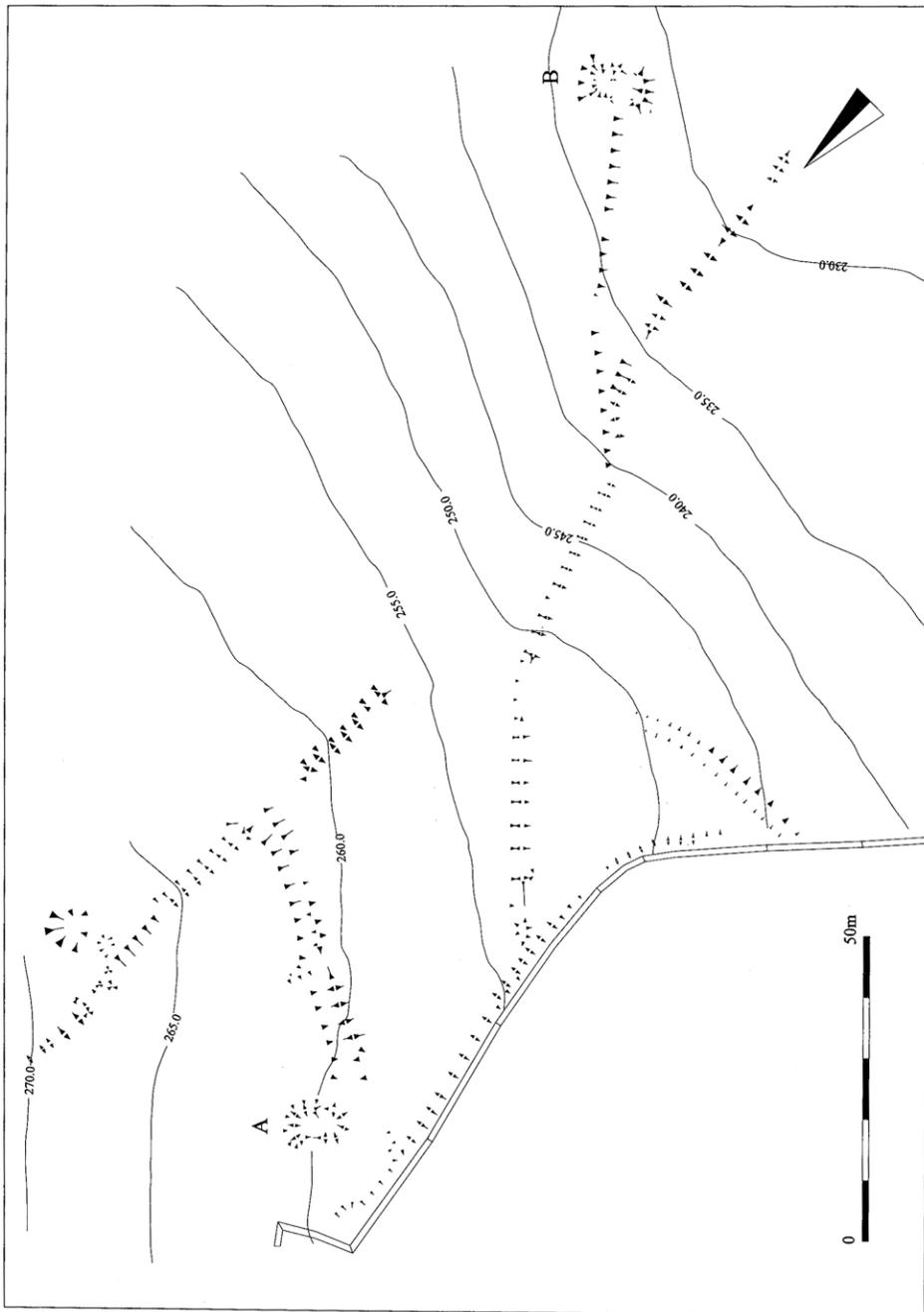


FIG. 2. Earthworks above Crose Dale Beck.

southern ends of this wall appeared to terminate in the vicinity of an approximately north-south aligned shallow depression which extended across the inside of the structure.

The south-western end of the structure was revetted by a curving, sloped, limestone rubble revetment *c.* 0.80 m wide [011]. It was in a very poor state of preservation, surviving to a maximum of two courses high only in the southern corner of the site. There were possible remnants of flanking walls returning to the north-east and aligned with wall [010]. Any flanking walls, at the south-western end of the site, however, would seem mostly to have been removed.

Dividing the two distinct halves of the structure, was a roughly north to south aligned earth bank, 0.50 m wide and 0.30 m high [014]. Initially it was considered that this bank post-dated the original construction of drystone wall [010], but further investigation in 1996 showed that its stratigraphic relationship with wall [010] clearly indicated that it was contemporary. The bank, therefore, represents a probable decayed turf internal division within the structure, with an entrance connecting the two halves of the structure at the south end of the bank. As an earthwork, prior to excavation, this bank had seemed to be a continuation of the lynchet, which appeared to be on the same alignment as it to the north. Excavation demonstrated that this was not the case.

The original floor surface [024] in the northern part of the structure, north of internal division [014], was formed of subsoil [023] which was first exposed during the quarrying of material for the thrust of the platform. The floor surface comprised orange/brown sandy loam which contained pea grits and small subangular and rounded stones. It was very friable and would have worn easily.

An irregular, roughly oval fire pit [025] measuring *c.* 1.20 m north-south by 0.90 m east-west was identified in the north-east corner of structure [007]. The fire pit [025] cut the natural floor surface [024], being 0.05 m deep, and was filled with burnt stones [026]. The natural floor surface [024] was clearly in use at the same time as fire pit [026] because it was speckled with charcoal close to the pit.

To the south of internal division [014] were the probable locations of opposing entrances. The main evidence for their former existence is the indication of a linear wear pattern across the structure between the two putative entrances, and the presence of a small patch of metalling [034] outside and to the north-west of the building (see Phase 3) which might indicate the approach to a threshold.

Neither the platform nor the walls produced any artefactual evidence associated with their construction. The presence of pottery, probably datable to the twelfth century, within the occupation horizon associated with the use of this structure, suggests, however, that it was built at or before the late twelfth century.

### *Phase 3: later occupation*

There was no evidence of a floor surface to the south of internal division [014] within the structure, but to the north the interior surface of the building was levelled up by a laid floor of a dark yellowish brown silty clay [008] with numerous small stones within it forming a firm surface. Surface [008] sealed the fire pit. Since the fire pit had fallen into dis-use, and was not replaced with another hearth, a change in use of the structure can be inferred as it may no longer have been suitable for

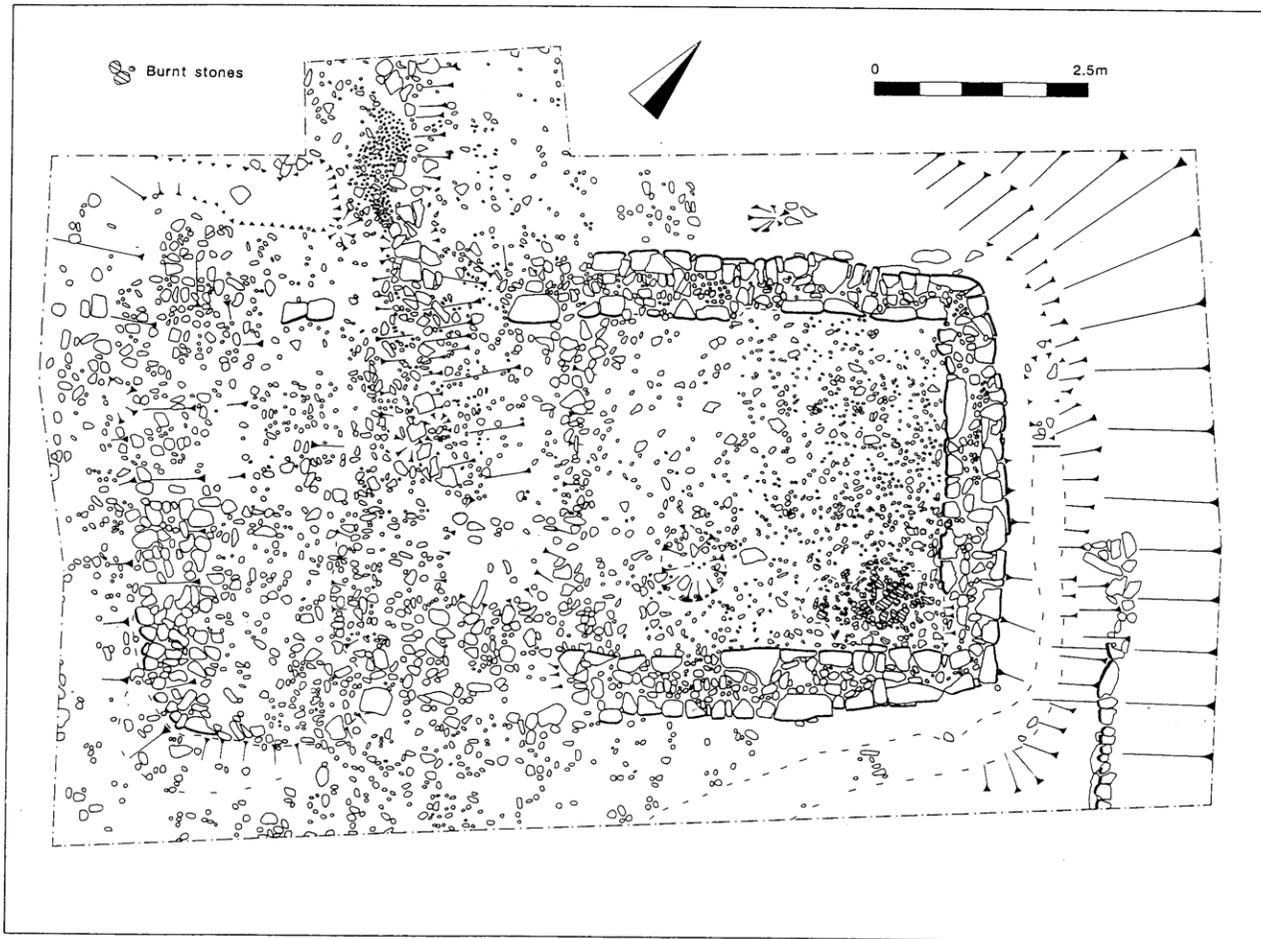


FIG. 3. Croseedale Excavation Plan

domestic accommodation.

The linear wear pattern within the structure to the south of internal division [014] comprised a shallow east-west aligned depression, with a small irregular patch of metalling [013], made of densely packed sub-angular small stones, within the base. This metalling measured 3m east-west by 1.50 m north-south and produced a single sherd (fabric 1) from a strap handled jug which is thought to date to between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Several sherds of the same vessel were recovered from later contexts (see Howard-Davis below). Another patch of similar metalling [034], was located outside and to the west of the structure. It measured 1.60 m x 0.70 m and was aligned east-west, on an identical alignment to the wear pattern and metalling [013] situated within the building. It probably formed the approach to the western threshold of the structure.

Around the north-eastern end of the building, starting at the northern corner and then running downslope was a gully [031], which cut the natural subsoil. This feature measured at least 7 m in length to the edge of the excavation, was between 0.30 m and 0.40 m wide and on average 0.20 m deep. It had steeply sloping sides and a relatively flat base. It appears to have been an eaves-drip, to carry water away from the dry stone walls, which drained away from the building in a southerly downslope direction, having mirrored the shape of the north-eastern end of the building. The gully had silted-up with a uniform orange-brown fill [032] derived from the surrounding natural subsoil, indicating rapid silting probably as a result of run-off from the steep slope to the north of the building.

A drainage channel [027] outside the western corner of the building drained down slope away from it. Channel [027] measured between 0.40 m and 0.70 m in width, was 0.20 m deep, and 2.60 m long, with clean near vertical sides, suggesting that it had not been open for a long period of time prior to silting up. Its fill [028] comprised a grey brown loam containing small pebbles and a few rounded and subangular stones. Channel [027] produced a single body fragment of cooking pot (fabric 3) of likely thirteenth to fourteenth century date (see Howard-Davis below). Two rim fragments probably of the same vessel were recovered from a residual context.

Both gully [031] and drainage channel [027] appeared to cut a dark yellowish brown clayey silt [003] which overlay natural subsoil [023] and seems to have been the soil that developed around the building during part of the occupation phase of the structure. This layer produced ten pottery sherds which are thought to have derived from a single cooking pot (fabric 2). The fabric of this vessel was unusual and difficult to date, though it may be twelfth century (see Howard-Davis below). Although not noticed until layer [003] was removed, a post-hole [035] also seems to have cut through it adjacent to the western wall of the building. This was oval in plan and had steeply sloping sides and a rounded base. It was filled with a yellowish mid-brown clay silt [033] which contained pea grits but no larger stones.

#### *Phase 4 abandonment*

To the north-east of the building and abutting it was a fairly even slope of material [029]. This comprised a yellow mid-brown clayey silt which contained large quantities of natural stone, and was presumed during the 1995 excavations to have

been a natural deposit. It was removed in 1996, and found to overlay natural subsoil [023] and layer [003] as well as revetment [022]. Rather than being a natural subsoil, layer [029] was thus a deposit perhaps laid down by water run-off down the slope, probably after occupation of the structure had ceased.

Layer [029] was overlain by a layer of quite dense rubble [015] which seems to have rolled down the slope from another feature, a platform of rubble, situated outside the area of excavation upslope to the north. This rubble was also revealed in the sondage excavated to the north of the main excavation area, where it had formed a small mound.

A thin spread of stone tumble [004] almost certainly derived from the walls of the structure, extended across much of the site. This sealed floor surface [008] and metalling [013], and the larger tumbled stones, were embedded into occupation layer [003]. The stones were distributed in a fairly random fashion with equal proportions being deposited internally and externally. A sherd from a strap handle of a jug (fabric 1), considered to date to the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, was recovered from this context (see Howard-Davis below).

The relatively small quantity of tumble identified suggests that either the upper portions of the walls were made of materials which have not survived within the archaeological record, such as timber and turf, or that the stones used in the construction of the walls were robbed for re-use elsewhere. No evidence of roofing material was identified within the tumble, indicating that the structure was probably roofed with material, such as turf or heather, which again has not survived within the archaeological record.

A thin gravelly layer of material [009] was identified within the shallow east-west depression in the south of the structure, above tumble [004]. This contained three body fragments of the strap handled jug found in a phase 3 context. The gravel layer is of unknown origin but relates to a later phase of use after the structure had undergone at least partial decay.

In the extreme south-west of the site, immediately downslope from the building platform, was a deposit of slumped material of loam and rubble. It partially sealed platform [012], platform revetment [011], and occupation layer [003]. This deposit comprised an orangey brown sandy loam containing a large quantity of small- and medium-sized subrounded and subangular stones. It was derived from the decay of the revetted platform [012] and any dry-stone walling that may have been placed upon it. This deposit produced four body fragments of a handled jug (fabric 1) of thirteenth to fourteenth century date, considered to be part of the same vessel as sherds found in other phase 4 contexts ([004] and [009]) and phase 3 metalling [013].

The ceramic evidence suggests that the structure and platform went out of use during the later thirteenth to fourteenth centuries.

#### *Phase 5: the site as an earthwork*

Following the abandonment of the structure, the site appears to have formed part of an area of rough grazing. A thin, 0.02 m thick, layer of silty loam [002] was detected immediately below the topsoil, sealing the archaeological features, and was probably formed as a result of root and animal activity intermixing the topsoil with the

archaeological horizons below. This layer produced two very abraded rim fragments of cooking pot (fabric 3) which probably date to the thirteenth/fourteenth centuries. Another body sherd of this fabric, which was probably derived from the same vessel, was recovered from phase 3 gully [027]. Layer [002] also produced two joining fragments of iron knife blade which probably date to the same period. All these artefacts were clearly residual having been disturbed from their original contexts.

The only recent activity on the site, other than sheep erosion of the earthworks, was a sheep burial [005]. This had been buried in living memory within the earthworks and had disturbed the floor deposits of the building.

### **The finds** - by Christine Howard-Davis

The site was poor in its artefactual content, with pottery forming the principal component of the finds assemblage.

#### *The pottery*

Only 23 fragments of pottery were recovered from the excavations, all relatively small. Three fabrics were recognised, each probably represented by a single vessel.

#### Fabric 1

Light grey reduced, very fine, medium hard fabric with mica and occasional fragments of calcite (presumably small voids in the unglazed internal surface represent the loss or decay of other such fragments). Light yellow-green glaze, distinctly pock-marked. Wheel thrown.

Fabric 1 is fairly typical of thirteenth/fourteenth century fabrics in the North-West (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 222).

1 fragment large strap handle.

CR095, 004/1002, Phase 4.

2 featureless body fragments.

CR095, 009/1001, Phase 4.

1 unglazed, abraded fragment. Probably fabric 1.

CR095, 009/1004, Phase 4.

1 fragment, thumbled base of handle, large vessel.

CR095, 013/1003, Phase 3.

4 featureless body fragments.

CR096, 21/1011, Phase 4.

1 featureless body fragment.

CR096, Unstratified.

There seems little doubt that all ten fragments derive from a single vessel, undoubtedly a handled jug, although nothing survives of either rim or base. Fragments from contexts [009] and [013] join.

## Fabric 2 (Fig. 4)

Reduced, dark grey sandy, soft-fired fabric with a laminar fracture and, on fresh breaks, a "sandwich effect" core. Manufacturing technique is unclear, probably wheel thrown but with copious knife trimming. The base bears some grass-marking.

Secondary burning has re-oxidised inner surfaces and left black carbonised residues.

9 fragments, base and lower body of a single vessel with a slightly sagging base.  
CR095, 003/1006, Phase 3.

1 featureless body fragment. CR095, 003/1007, Phase 3.



FIG. 4.

Again there seems little doubt that all ten fragments derive from the same vessel. No diagnostic rim fragments were recovered, but the sagging base, oxidation through secondary burning and heavy sooting all suggest a cooking pot. The fabric is unusual and cannot be easily placed, suggesting that it might be locally produced.

With no diagnostic sherds remaining, it is also difficult to date. It can be stated with confidence that it is neither Prehistoric nor Roman in date, and the fabric does not resemble other medieval fabrics in the locality. This must raise the possibility that it might reflect a local early medieval tradition. As this period, however, is seemingly aceramic over large parts of the North-West, the pottery assemblage is not well known or easily characterised.

The relatively fine, sandy fabric, along with evidence of grass-marking, might suggest a Saxo-Norman date although it is difficult to provide local comparators. Laing (1977, 115) has noted that several of the early medieval wares, for instance Chester ware, or Torksey ware, form part of "ceramic traditions which begin in the Saxon period and continue to develop through to the thirteenth and even fourteenth century" and it is perhaps possible to place Fabric 2 within this continuum.

The fabric bears a generic resemblance to Torksey Ware (Mainman 1990, Watkins 1991) which can be dated, in the main, to the tenth and eleventh centuries, and would not seem out of place in the range of early medieval sandy wares described for London by Vince and Jenner (1991, 56-62). It also resembles part of the range of the fabrics described as Chester ware (Laing 1977) although it is clearly not directly linked to any of them. Such wares span a period from the tenth to the twelfth centuries and it has been suggested (McCarthy pers comm, Brooks pers comm) that Fabric 2 might be dated to the twelfth century; the lack of rim or other diagnostic sherds precludes any further certainty.

## Fabric 3

Soft, pale pinkish oxidised fabric, fine with occasional quartz. Wheel thrown.

1 featureless body fragment. The outer surface is slightly sooted.  
CR096, 027/1012, Phase 3.

2 fragments out-turned rim, probably joining but very abraded.  
Cooking pot?  
CR096, 002/1008, Phase 5

It again seems likely that the three fragments derive from a single vessel. Although abraded, the rim fragments suggest an out-turned and slightly flaring cooking pot rim, possibly contemporary with the Fabric 1 jug, although in a somewhat different fabric.

### *Other finds*

#### Ironwork

Two joining fragments of a knife blade. These represent approximately half of a narrow straight-backed blade. The tip of the blade is missing, and the other end of the blade is broken as it narrows towards the tang. The section here (rectangular but not as wide as the blade) suggests a scale tang.  
CR096, 002/1009, Phase 5.

Small blades are difficult to date, but pottery from the same context suggests a thirteenth to fourteenth century date.

#### **Historical context** – by Caron Newman

Crosedale today is the name of a beck and a farm lying to the east of Howgill Lane, a route which roughly follows the line of the Roman road which led north to the fort of Low Borrowbridge. Current by the thirteenth century, the name Crosedale derives from the Old English *cro* + *dael*, meaning valley of the cross (Mills 1991, 380). The cross in question was almost certainly a boundary marker, as Crosedale Beck formed the southern boundary of the township of Bland (Douglas 1999, 18), in the parish of Sedbergh.

The earliest mention of the name Crosedale occurs in the cartulary of Cockersand Abbey (Farrer 1905, 962-3). Between 1200 and 1268, amongst the land grants made to the Canons of Cockersand in Lancashire, were grants concerning land within Bland. This was a township situated between Carlingill to the north and the township of Marthwaite to the south. Two of the grants made by German de Bland, between 1200 and 1250, refer specifically to Crosedale (see Elphick and Lancaster, 1989). The first describes five acres next to *Crosdalebec* in the croft which was held by Orm, son of Thor (Farrer 1905, 962). The second grant is more detailed and concerns a grant of land of unspecified size, the boundaries of which are detailed:

from the ford of Crosdale Beck to the cross, from the cross to the waingate where the ditch was made, following the waingate towards the north to the boundary of the land which was Astin's and so across to the land which was William Hyne's, following that land unto Henry's "hegening", following the same unto Crosdale beck and following Crosdale beck unto the said ford.

The first document is of interest because it grants part of a croft, or enclosure, indicating that, although sub-divided, it was land held in severalty. The second document details a discrete area of land. The perambulation of the boundary describes neighbouring holdings belonging to Astin and William Hyne, as well as Henry's *hegening*. This latter appears to derive from the Old English *haecce + ing* meaning a place characterized by a fence, or an enclosed piece of land (Field 1972, 270; Mills 1991, 382); conversely the *ing* element may derive from Old Norse meaning meadow (Field 1972, 271), thus the whole probably means an enclosed meadow. The description of the neighbouring lands indicates consolidated holdings rather than a shared common field system. The description of the boundary begins at the ford, which Farrer (1905, 963) places at Hud's Bridge, where Crosedale Beck is crossed by Howgill Lane. The location of the cross is unknown, but presumably it lay on the township boundary, perhaps on the beck to the east or west of the ford. The waingate, or wagon way, is described as running north and it may thus refer to the track shown on the tithe map of 1843 (CROK WSRD/S/5), and which is now a footpath, leading north from Crosedale Farm.

Both grants refer to common rights, but apart from pannage of the swine, they do not specify what those rights are (Farrer 1905, 962). However, other grants within Bland, given by Adam son of John de Bland and Benedict son of Waldeve, state common of pasture (Farrer 1905, 956-62), and in one case even specifies an area sufficient for a given number of animals, including cattle, horses and sheep (Farrer 1905, 962). It can be assumed that the common pasturage was on the unenclosed fell. The grants also refer to dales or shares of land, indicating that there were common arable and meadow fields (Douglas, 1999, 18). Although the Crosedale grants appear to refer to enclosed fields, post-medieval leases contain field names which indicate that it had common fields also (see below).

The two Crosedale grants do not refer to scales or shielings, although such references can be found in two other grants of land in Castley and Brunt Syke (Farrer 1905, 956, 959). The first describes,

one scale in Castlehow (now Castley), . . . and one scale upon the lower part of Whitefell Middle Tongue.

The second grant also details,

a scale . . . , namely, an acre and a half; one rood and sixteen perches between the Brendsike and Quinhou, . . . and a scale between Nevelbeck and Carling gill.

Farrer interprets *Quinhou* in the second grant as Winder. However, this would be most unlikely as Winder Fell lies some distance to the south of Brunt Syke, and is in fact to the south of Crosedale beck, the southern boundary of Bland. It is thought (Douglas pers comm) that *Quinhou* is more likely to refer to Whinny Howe, a field name preserved on the 1843 tithe map (Douglas pers comm). If so, then the name would derive from the Old Norse *hvin + haugr* meaning hill where the gorse grows (Field 1972, 253, 271). The exact location of the scales is unknown, although at least one stood upon the lower slopes of the fells, presumably fairly close to the areas of settlement.

A scale, or shieling, is sometimes defined as a hut or huts, usually associated with summer grazing in upland areas (Mills 1991, 287). The description of the scale at

Brunt Syke indicates that the term could also apply to more than just structures, as it specifically refers to an area of land. This land may have taken the form of an enclosure or enclosures to confine sheep or cattle for specific purposes such as lambing or calving. Scales located fairly close to the home settlement, such as the one on the lower slopes of Whitefell Middle Tongue, have also been noted in the Kentmere Valley, in the Lake District (Atkin 1991, 76). Here, it is considered that they may have served as a base for exploiting grazing land too far from the main settlement for the stock to reach daily, and that they may have been used to store hay from remoter hay meadows. A survey of possible shieling sites on the Howgill Fells noted that out of 45 earthwork sites, all but four lay on the lower slopes of the fell (Cleasby 1991).

A series of deeds for Crosedale provides further evidence of land usage in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Some names, such as Acre Dales (WRO S/355/896; U/400/504; IG/286/285) and Dale Slack (SDHS XB 1.6; WRO S/355/896; U/400/504; IG/286/285), indicate a field under common cultivation, from the Old Norse *deill* meaning a share of the common field. Given the presence of Outfield, recorded in 1722 (WRO S/355/896), 1724 (WRO U/400/504) and 1825 (SDHS XB 1.6; WRO IG/286/285), and shown on the 1843 tithe map and a sale map of 1861, it seems likely that Acre Dale and Dale Slack formed part of a common infield. Broadrairie (SDHS XB 1.6; WRO NN/433/609; IG/286/285), which lay next to Acre Dale, is a name taken from the Old English *brad* (Field 1972, 30) and Old Norse *reinn* (Field 1972, 179) meaning a wide piece of land on a boundary. This may denote the edge of an earlier infield, or a major division within it, although it is only known to be recorded from 1825. Other names indicate enclosed fields, for example Haygarth, recorded from the eighteenth century (WRO S/355/896; U/400/504; NN/433/609; IG/286/285), and Parrock (meaning a paddock) or Peas Parrock, in the nineteenth century (WRO S/355/896; U/400/504; NN/433/609; IG/286/285). The poor quality of some of the land, particularly on the slopes leading up to the open fell, is illustrated by names such as Clerk Mire (SDHS XB 1.6; WRO IG/286/285), Gransor (or Grandsey) Mire (SDHS XB 1.6; WRO S/355/896; U/400/504; NN/433/609; IG/286/285), Black Mire (WRO S/355/896; U/400/504; NN/433/609; IG/286/285) and Great and Little Hungry Bank (SDHS XB 1.2; XB 1.6; WRO PP/327/481; AB/232/310; AF/31/40; IG/286/285). The 18th and early 19th century leases also record a Scale close, although its location is not known and it is not shown on the tithe map of 1843 (CROK WSRD/S/5) or the sale map of 1861. This is unfortunate as the name would indicate a field in near proximity to a former scale. Nevertheless, it does indicate at least the former presence of scales in the vicinity.

## Discussion

Excavations at Crosedale in 1995 and 1996 revealed a building dating to the medieval period. Although no artefacts were found in association with the building's construction and few with its use, most being found in contexts relating to abandonment and decay, the dating of the artefact assemblage is considered to be indicative of the date of occupation of the building; post-occupation disturbance being responsible for the residual nature of the occurrence of many of the artefacts.

On this basis it seems likely that the building was constructed probably no earlier than the later twelfth century and abandoned by the mid-fourteenth.

The building appears to be of a type common in other upland contexts: a level platform is constructed by the removal of material at the upslope end with this material being redeposited at the downslope end to form a thrust. This thrust is revetted, with the revetment forming the downslope wall of the building. In the uplands of south Wales such structures are referred to as platform houses (Fox 1939). At Croseedale the walls were dry stoned and, judging from their variable and in places quite narrow width and crude coursing, were probably always low in height consistent with the smallish quantities of tumble associated with the building. At Brown Moor, a seemingly undisturbed putative shieling site, walls of less than a metre in height above present ground level were noted (Cleasby 1991, 7). The Royal Commission in their survey of supposed shielings (mostly upland sites) noted that turf was frequently used in such hut construction (Ramm *et al* 1970, 6) and in some cases they were entirely turf-built (Richardson 1979, 25). The limitations on space within a building of such a relatively small ground plan indicate that the roof may not have been attached directly to the low walls but have been raised and supported by turf or timber on top of the stone walling (Howard-Davis *et al* 1996, 10). Nevertheless, higher stone walls, the stone from which was later robbed, cannot be ruled out entirely as an interpretation of the excavated evidence. The rounded external, but squared internal corners of the wall, and its relatively narrow width are indicative of a hipped roof, and are a common feature on buildings originating in the later twelfth century both locally and elsewhere in western Britain.

The location of a fire pit in the eastern corner of the structure suggests that the roof height at the sides of the structure was quite low. A vent in the roof, at perhaps no more than a metre or so above ground level, would have ensured that smoke would have escaped easily, keeping the remainder of the space relatively smoke-free. The potential fire hazard to the roof represented by such an arrangement would have been mitigated to an extent by using turf as a roofing material. The position in the eastern corner, away from the prevailing wind, would have protected the vent from the worst draughts and rain penetration. The corner location would also have maximised standing space in the central area of the building.

The fire pit, and the sherds of jug and cooking pots (though not demonstrably belonging to the same phase as the fire pit), clearly indicate that the building was occupied as a domestic structure, at least prior to the sealing of the fire pit by the later floor layer. Unlike some other upland medieval structures, such as Simy Folds (Coggings *et al* 1983), there were no artefacts such as spindle whorls, to suggest the presence of women, and thus indicate that an entire family might have occupied the structure.

At many upland sites the artefact record is extremely poor, only the turf-built building and presumed shieling at King's Stables, near Bewcastle has previously yielded much pottery, 46 sherds. There, unlike at Croseedale, the majority of the fragments were found on or in the floor of the building (Richardson 1979, 25). At Croseedale, all the pottery can be interpreted as deriving from no more than three vessels, which compares poorly with nearby sites at lower altitudes. The partially excavated late medieval/early post-medieval domestic structure at Underbank, a few kilometres to the east and 110 m lower in altitude, produced evidence of 21 different

vessels (Addyman *et al* 1963, 35-38). Even so, the lack or otherwise of finds cannot be used as a guide to the permanence of occupation, as some permanently occupied upland farmsteads in the area, such as Powsons near Tebay, have produced virtually no artefacts (Lambert 1996).

The archaeological evidence indicates that with adequate maintenance the structure excavated at Crosedale would have been a reasonably durable building, capable of being occupied for some centuries. This does not imply that the structure must have been permanently occupied and, therefore, not a shieling-type site. The idea that shieling huts were impermanent or temporary (as in Whyte 1985 and see Mills 1991, 287) is incorrect, rather, as Atkin maintained, they “were permanent dwellings but were only temporarily in use” (1991, 76). They were seasonal settlements (Fox 1996), though as the Garsdale place-name Winterscales suggests, not all such sites were for summer use (Smith 1958, 263).

The excavated evidence alone cannot indicate the full nature and purpose of the building. When taken together with evidence in the landscape and in the documentary record, however, a picture emerges. Close by, to the north of the excavated structure, was a rectangular level platform of stones; this can be interpreted as a stack stand for drying and storing hay, similar to the excavated example at King’s Stables (Richardson 1979, 21-2). The Crosedale structure also seems to have been associated with a system of ‘dykes’, linking it with at least one similar structure. It has been noted that shieling sites were often clustered together (Ramm *et al* 1970; Cleasby 1991, 7; Whyte 1985, 112).

The site at Crosedale is typologically similar to others in the Howgill Fells, some of which have been identified as shielings recorded in the *Cockersand Chartulary* as scales (Cleasby 1991, 7). Interestingly in Wales similar platform houses have been interpreted as *hafotai*, the Welsh equivalent of a shieling (Fox 1939; Crampton 1968). Scales, a term derived from the Old Norse *skali*, are one of a number of place names associated with shieling-type sites in northern England (Whyte 1985, 105-8). Recent research, however, has shown not only that there are differences in the distribution of the place names associated with shielings, but that some appear to be functionally related. For example Mary Higham has argued that the term *aergi*, as in the nearby hill name Winder (Smith 1958, 265), seems to apply not to summer grazing lands but to cattle farming in often lowland areas (Higham 1978). Conversely, in medieval sources, scales are linked to sheep farming (Quine 1996, 46), and are found at higher more remote locations than some other shieling-type place name elements (Whyte 1985, 105).

If the Crosedale site was a scale, or part of one, as they could consist of more than one hut, then its location in relation to permanently occupied settlements needs to be considered. It lies only about 400 m from the site of the modern Crosedale Farm, and only 200 m from the fell wall which separates the enclosed land from the unenclosed fell. The height difference between the excavation site and farm is about 70 m. Whilst Crosedale Farm may not have medieval origins, the documentary record indicates that the lowlands in the Crosedale vicinity were settled and enclosed during the thirteenth century (see Douglas 1999), and by at least the seventeenth century there appears to have been a small hamlet at Crosedale Beck (SDHS XB 8). Archaeological work in the 1950s led to the conclusion that the modern settlement pattern of the Sedbergh area retains much of its late medieval form (Addyman *et al*

1963, 33). Thus it is reasonable to assume that the medieval hut sites on the fellside near Croosedale Beck lay close to permanently occupied contemporary settlements at lower altitudes.

The distinction between areas of year-round settlement and summer pastures was not necessarily altitude related, the difference between the two land uses perhaps reflecting land quality (Whyte 1985, 109). In Kentmere, scales have been noted within a mile or so of the main permanently occupied settlement, and at a lower altitude. These have been linked with what in Norway would be the *heimster* bases for exploiting grazings at distances too far for daily exploitation from the main settlement (Atkin 1991, 76). Clearly this is not the case at Croosedale. The use of upland grazings in the summer months in the medieval period is well attested, and often the distance travelled could be relatively little, with animals returning to the home farm each night (Higham 1996, 58). If the summer pastures near the Croosedale site were being exploited by settlements in the valley, this would have been easily achievable and the huts would have been unnecessary.

The location of the Croosedale huts makes little sense unless they were not directly associated with the landholding system in the immediately adjacent valley lands. The huts lay outside the enclosed land and arable town fields, which appear to be suggested by the *Cockersand Chartulary*. The present fell wall in part follows a ditch, which in the medieval period may have demarcated the boundary between the commonable fell and the enclosed lands; an arrangement noted elsewhere in the region (see Roberts 1993, 445-9). The Croosedale site seems most likely, then, to be part of an exploitation of the fells directed not from settlements immediately in the valley, but from further afield, in which daily travel to upland grazings from permanently-occupied farm centres holding the grazing rights was not possible. This indicates that the hut sites were part of a transhumance system. In the vicinity, the Cistercian abbeys of Holm Cultram and Furness are known to have established bercaries involving the long-distance movement of sheep flocks from lowland estate centres to summer upland pastures (McDonnell 1988, 9). It seems reasonable to assume that the Premonstratensian abbey of Cockersand may have established a similar system in the locality.

The most compelling interpretation of the excavated site at Croosedale is that it was a medieval scale, associated with other similar sites on the fell of the township of Bland. The site may have been occupied sporadically during the summer for up to 200 years, perhaps originally being established as part of a monastic bercary system organised by Cockersand Abbey.

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CRO(K) WPC32/15.

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