

COMMENTS.

This is undoubtedly a Mesolithic industry, but the rarity of microliths makes it difficult to assign the assemblage to any particular culture. However, taken as a whole, the assemblage is similar to the geometric group of the Southern Pennines, which along with the Shippea Hill material was considered by Clark to have affinities with the French Sauveterrian.²

The size of the residual flint cores is of some interest, even if this is conditioned by the size of the flint pebbles available. The cores range from 8 to 27 gms. One conical core is below this range and is only 3.5 gms. This compares well with the average range of cores associated with the geometric microlithic industries on the Pennines around Huddersfield.

The flints, which are the property of the landowner, Mr. John Gillies Shields, are in the keeping of the writer, who would like to take this opportunity of expressing his thanks to him and also to the occupier, Mr. R. H. Warren, for permission to search. Thanks are also due to the British Museum and to Mr. T. G. Manby for reports on the flints.

MELANDRA CASTLE EXCAVATIONS, 1959.

By JAMES A. PETCH.

IN 1959 work at Melandra Castle began on 22 August and continued until 6 September. Expenditure on tools and the hire of a hut, the latter generously provided at a nominal charge by Messrs. C. V. Armstrong of Broadbottom, was borne by the Excavations Subcommittee of the Manchester Branch of the Classical Association. A volunteer labour force, admirably organized by Mr. L. J. Webb of Broadbottom, carried through the work with enthusiasm. Permission was readily granted

² *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, XXI (1955), 3-20. See also *Arch. News Letter*, VI, no. 3 (1956), 63

by the Minister of Works and by Mr. J. Gould, the owner of the site. Mr. A. H. Bell again undertook the photography.

The object of the work was two-fold — to continue gleaning what further information can be gleaned from this ill-used site and simultaneously to tidy away some of the traces of the work of fifty years ago.¹ Attention was confined to the western half of the *praetentura*. Twenty squares, each 10 by 10 ft., were opened up along two base lines, one running from the north-western corner of the *principia* to the north-western corner tower, the second line at right angles to the first and approximately half-way along it. When the time came to fill in these squares, some of the neighbouring mounds and depressions left by earlier workers were levelled out. The very dry summer gave conditions pleasant for working except that it made even more laborious the moving of the old compacted spoil heaps.

A little more was added to the plan of the interior of the fort. A post trench approximately 14 ins. wide and cut to a depth of 8 ins. into the natural clay was found running parallel to the northern wall of the *principia* and in line with the southern end of the buildings found in 1938. This can therefore be taken to represent the southern end of a building in the western half of the *praetentura* such as is indicated conjecturally on the 1943 version of the plan of the fort,² the width of the *via principalis* being approximately 30 ft. Substantial remains of one wooden post and traces of two others, at intervals of 14 ins., confirmed that this was a Roman post trench, totally different even in superficial appearance from the narrower and more regular cuttings made in recent times for a system of 3-inch field pipes at a depth of 2 ft. and more in the natural clay. A large fragment of an amphora lay on the top of the original clay immediately to the north of the line of the post trench and along the north side, presumably representing the interior flooring, there was a layer, 10 ins. thick, of small cobbles and gravel. While therefore the presence in this area of a structure belonging to the

¹ *D.A.J.*, LXXVIII (1958), 8-9.

² *D.A.J.*, LXIV (1943), plan.

wooden phase of the fort seems to be established, its dimensions remain to be discovered.

No other trenches were discovered with certainty in 1959; indications in another part of the *praetentura* require further examination. The conjectural lay-out shown in the 1943 plan has a congested look, but in 1959 substantial remains of a layer of gravel 5 to 6 ins. thick were found where the plan has a roadway running down the centre of the western half of the *praetentura*. The post-hole illustrated in Plate VIIIa was set in this layer to a depth of 10 ins. Though no other structural remains were found in this area, remains of burnt wattle-and-daub occurred in nearly every square examined.

Bruton and Swarbrick's plan³ shows a stone drain running behind the western rampart. A length of this was examined near the north-western corner tower (Plate VIIIb). The channel is 16 ins. wide and the sides are somewhat rudely built of blocks of stone 7 to 12 ins. wide and 5 to 7 ins. deep. Some wedge-shaped stones looked like re-used building stones. The drain ran at a level higher than an occupation layer to the east and over remains of a clay baulk which seems to belong to an earlier period than that of the drain. An interesting feature was a narrow groove about 6 ins. wide and cut 3 ins. deep in the natural clay, filled with puddled clay. The groove was partly covered by the drain but on a line slightly askew to it. A return groove similar in construction though somewhat narrower and more shallow, at right angles to the first but stopping a few inches short of it, ran behind the line of the northern rampart. It can be seen in Plate VIIIb as a dark line though in fact its colour was lighter than that of the natural clay.⁴ These grooves may have some connection with the setting-out of the first fort on the site; the stone drain seems to belong to a later period.

In all the areas examined pottery was singularly rare. What was found will be reported upon at some later opportunity. A ribbed melon bead, pale blue in colour, was found in top soil.

³ *Melandra Castle*, ed. R. S. Conway (Manchester 1906), plan at end; cf. 55.

⁴ The groove was watered to aid photography.

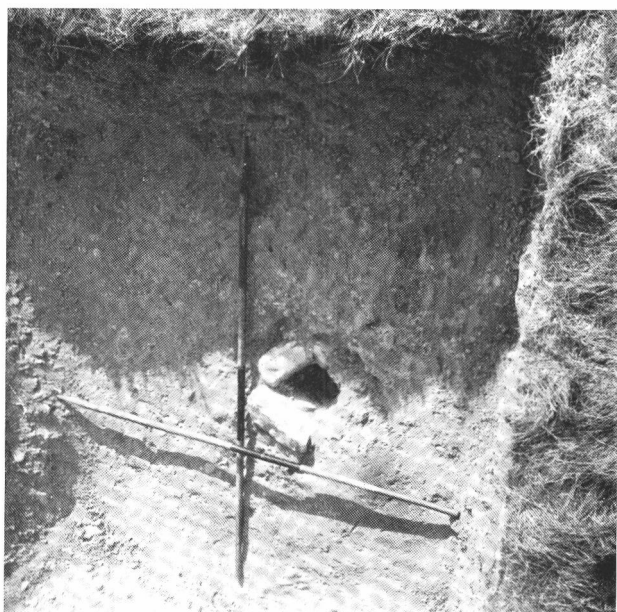


PLATE VIIIa. Melandra Castle — post-hole in gravelled area.

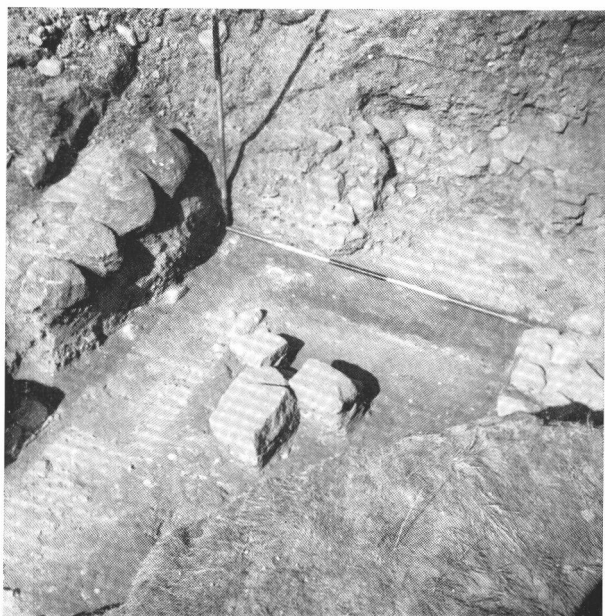


PLATE VIIIb. Melandra Castle — stone drain with traces of early fort below.

