

"CELTIC FIELDS" AT BLACKWELL.

## “CELTIC FIELDS” AT BLACKWELL, TADDINGTON

By F. THOMAS.

**M**EDIEVAL lynchets are fairly common in Derbyshire, good examples being found at Priestcliffe, Taddington, at Matlock and on the slopes west of Bakewell. “Celtic Fields”, on the other hand, are rare, but a survey was made in May 1961 of a fine set on sloping pasture land at Blackwell, about 900 yds. west-south-west of Miller’s Dale railway station (SK 131731). The term “Celtic Fields”, it should be noted, is generally regarded as a most unsatisfactory one, but it continues to be used simply because it is so indefinite to describe “all those fields of regular shape which were laid out before the Saxons established themselves in this country”. This definition is taken from *Ancient Fields*, a booklet written by H. C. Bowen for the British Association Research Committee on Ancient Fields which offers an excellent guide to the study of this subject.

To the north of these fields at Blackwell, the slope falls to the ravine of the River Wye, and on the east to Sandy Brook in Blackwell Dale. The farmland to the south and west has been intensively cultivated with regular ploughing, and no shadow or soil marks have yet been detected showing any further extension of these fields. It is, however, possible that an aerial photograph taken in a dry summer would show crop marks. The site itself was ploughed in 1959, but this was the only occasion in recent years.

The fields have been partly blotted out by medieval strip lynchets, but sufficient remains to identify them as “Celtic” for an area of about 25 acres (Plate XXXV). A double-lynchet track can be seen for a few yards near the cave or old lead mine marked on the east side of the plan, and doubtful traces of it can be detected here and there up to the coppice on the north-west. Significantly, this track leads to the only place where the Sandy Brook is easily accessible from the site (Fig. 16).

Mr. Gregory, the owner and farmer of the land at Blackwell, pointed out further slight earthworks on his land near Chee Tor. Time did not permit a survey, but these consist of low banks forming irregular, slightly rounded rectangles, 15-20 ft. in diameter. As they seem too small for fields and too numerous for animal pens, a settlement site is possible. Together with associated enclosure banks, they cover an area of about 2 acres. It is hoped to make a survey in the near future.

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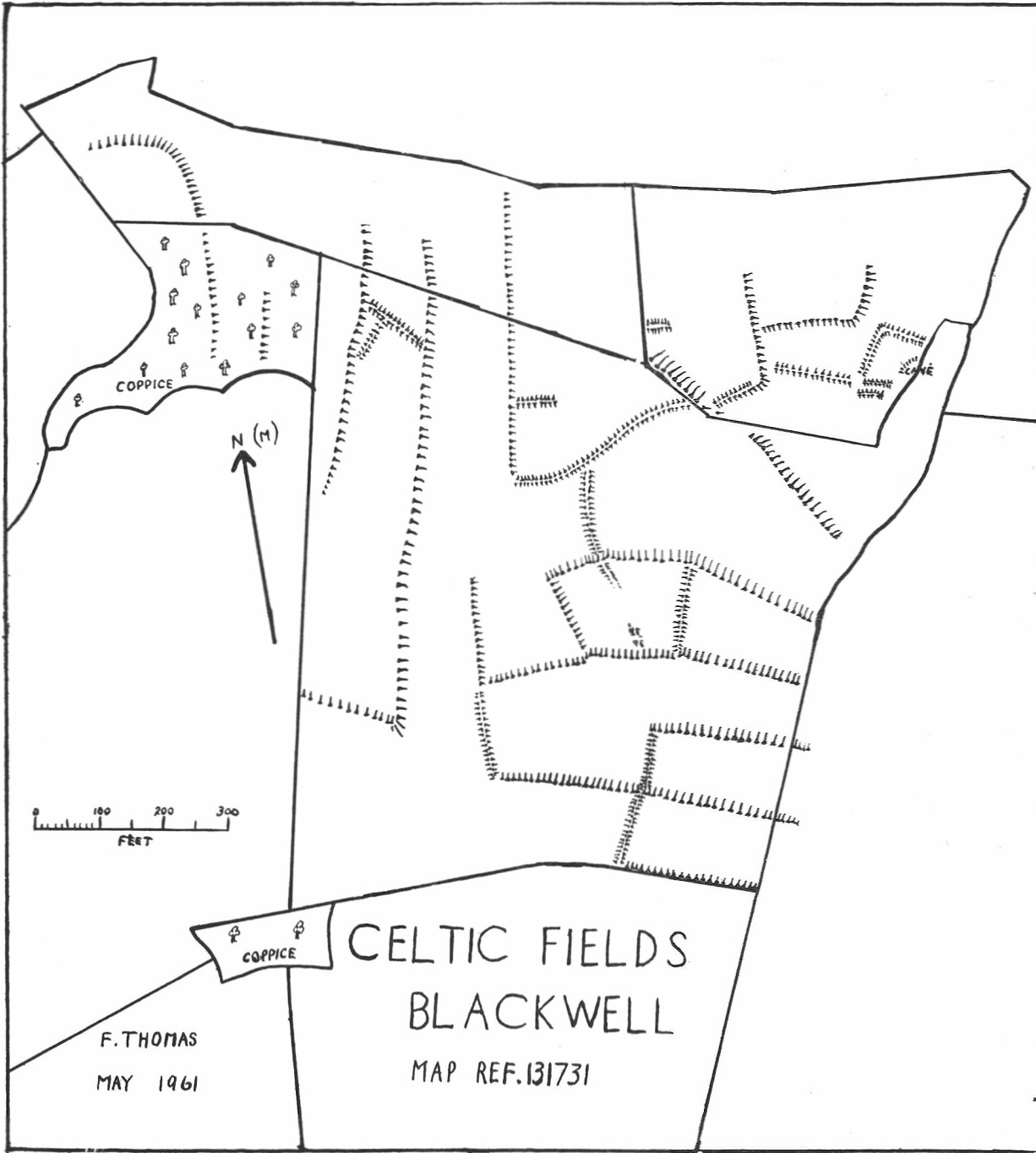


FIG. 16.