

Archaeological Reports

TERRACED CULTIVATION AT PRIESTCLIFFE, NEAR TADDINGTON

By J. WILFRID JACKSON

FOR several years the Buxton Archaeological and Natural History Society has been interested in the many examples of terraced cultivation in Derbyshire, especially those in the neighbourhood of Buxton. Only the group at Priestcliffe (Horse Stead) has so far received special attention, though observations have been made elsewhere. In 1958 these were investigated under my direction by members of the Buxton Society, including Messrs. K. A. Forrest, Leslie Jackson, I. E. Burton, D. Munro and R. J. Smith. Permission was readily granted by Mr. Percy Longden, the owner of the site, and Mr. J. Oven, the tenant farmer.

The group consists of thirteen large steps, banks or terraces running approximately north to south on a hill-slope below and above the 1,100 ft. contour (Fig. 30). In some parts the terraces run along the contour and in others counter to it in a curvilinear fashion. They occupy the greater part of a large walled field of 6.002 acres (507), and are entirely on an extensive outcrop of the upper lava (toadstone), which has weathered to a fairly rich soil. The lava lies between two limestone divisions which do not appear to have been intruded upon by the terraces. The whole sequence of geological strata dips slightly to the north-east. The lengths of the terraces are conditioned by the amount of decayed lava on the slope of the hill.

The terraces may conveniently be divided into three groups:

- West Three short terraces (1-3) extending southwards from the wall of field 424.
Middle One short (4) and four long terraces (5-8), nos. 6-8 extending southwards from the wall of field 423.
East Five short terraces (9-13) extending southwards parallel to the wall of field 474. The "tread" or arable surface of no. 13 is partly under that wall (Plate VIII).

There is a small gap between the west and middle groups. Terraces 1-4 are below the 1,100 ft. contour; no. 5 is on the contour; and nos. 6-13 are above and rise higher progressively.

Dimensions of the terraces

	<i>Length</i> <i>ft.</i>		<i>Width of tread</i> <i>ft.</i>
West group	1. 170	1-2.	15-30
	2. 152	2-3.	40
	3. 140		



Terraces at Priestcliffe.

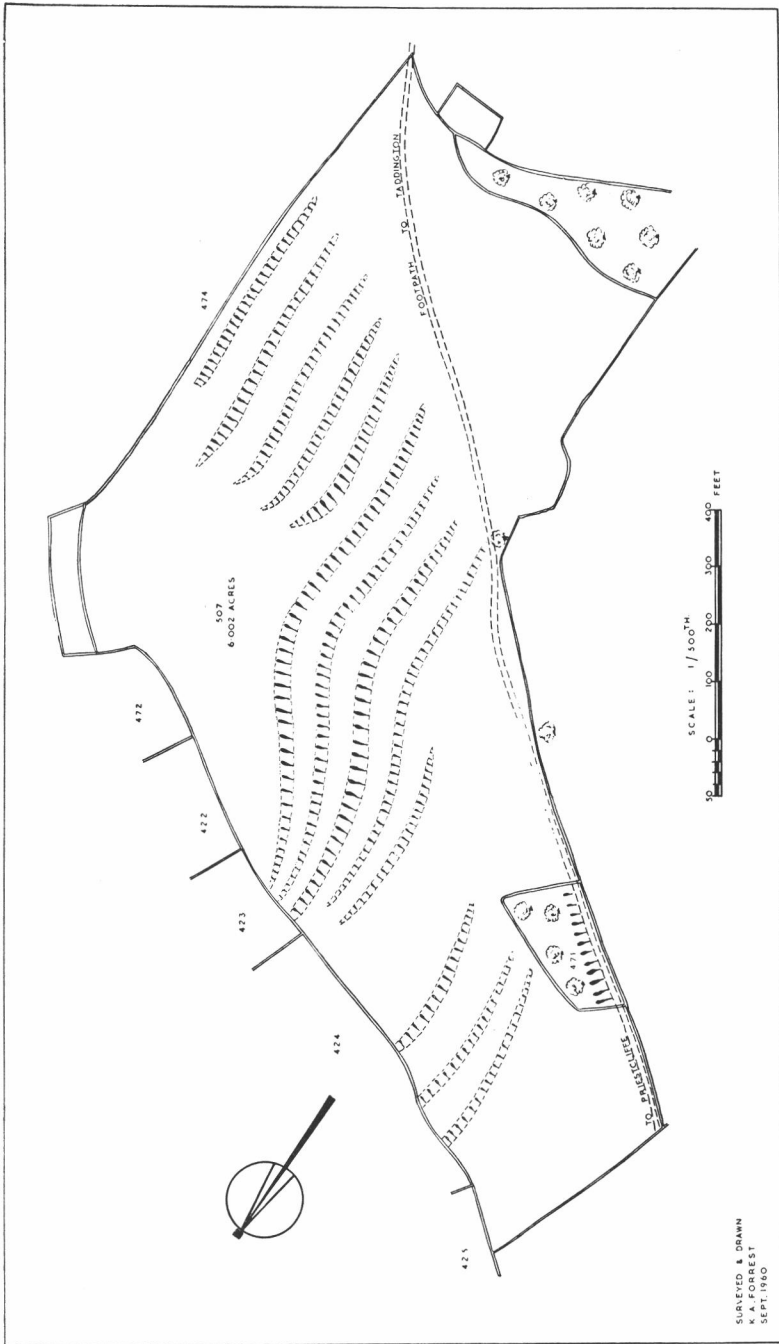


FIG. 30. Terraces at Priestcliffe.

Middle group	4.	170	4-5.	20-25
	5.	350	5-6.	15-30
	6.	380	6-7.	10-25
	7.	400	7-8.	10-26
	8.	465	8-9.	20-40
East group	9.	180	9-10.	25 at ends
	10.	185	10-11.	25 „ „
	11.	220	11-12.	30 „ „
	12.	240	12-13.	30-25
	13.	200		

The 'risers' or scarps vary in height and do not appear to have been built up in any way. Trial excavations revealed no stonework. The treads were found on excavation to be shallow (about 2 ft.) at the foot of the risers and deeper (about 4-5 ft.) at the outer edges. The terraces have a curvilinear arrangement and open ends. They run out to unploughed ground, but the ends of some are uncertain as they are overlain by stone walls.

There appears to be no foreseeable threat to the Priestcliffe terraces. The field is used for rough grazing. The presence of the toadstone has probably saved them from destruction.

At present no definite conclusions can be reached about the date of the terraces as no remains, except fragments of charcoal, were found in the preliminary excavations. Comparable examples of such terraces in the Craven area of Yorkshire have been thought to be of the Anglo-Saxon period.¹

EARTHWORKS ON CHEE TOR, BLACKWELL, NEAR TADDINGTON

By F. THOMAS

THE earthworks on Chee Tor are situated on a promontory formed by the winding gorge of the river Wye. The land is well cropped pasture and is not known to have been ploughed, the turf forming a good protective cover. Although a railway tunnel on the main line from London to Manchester passes directly beneath the site, it is to a great extent isolated. Apart from a very steep path from the Wye, the only approach is across the private land of Blackwell Hall. This inaccessibility probably explains why the site has not been recognized until recently.

These earthworks are low banks which appear to mark the foundations of a settlement and its associated enclosures (Fig. 31). No traces of fortifications can be found even though the site could well have been made into a promontory fort. The Celtic Fields, surveyed in 1961, are only 600 yds. E.S.E. and are almost certainly to be associated with this settlement.

It is difficult to date such a site from a superficial examination, but the

¹ See A. Raistrick and S. E. Chapman, *Antiquity*, III (1929), 165-81.