EXCAVATIONS AT CAMP GREEN, HATHERSAGE (1976–77)—A NORMAN RINGWORK

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SUMMARY

Excavations were undertaken in two areas inside the ringwork known as Camp Green during the winter of 1976–77, and in May, 1977, at the request of Mr. and Mrs. A. Butler who wished to make alterations to their garden. The first excavation, immediately to the north of the present house, Eastwood, showed that this area had been destroyed by a late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century timber extension to the house. The second excavation consisted of a cutting through the rampart and down to the ditch. The phasing of this defensive work was revealed but not securely dated.

Location and past descriptions

Camp Green (less commonly known as the Danes Camp) lies immediately to the northeast of the church of St. Michael's, Hathersage, on a knoll dominating the modern village (SK 234819). The knoll appears to be composed of a shale outcrop that is well drained. It commands a considerable area of the rich farming land in the Hope Valley, and past it now runs one of the link roads up to Stanedge Edge where millstones were quarried in the post-medieval period (and perhaps in an earlier period as well) (Fig. 1).

One of the earliest writers to comment on this site was William Bray in 1783. In his '*Sketch of a Tour into Derbyshire and Yorkshire*', undertaken in 1779, he discovered at Camp Green a 'high and pretty large circular mound of earth, inclosed by a deep ditch'. He records that it was 144 feet in diameter, and on his plan he shows tracks entering it from the west, east, and south.[1] The celebrated Youlgrave antiquarian, Thomas Bateman, visited Hathersage during the 1840's and in his first book, *Vestiges of Antiquities in Derbyshire*, he records it in much the same terms as Bray.[2] At Bateman's request, his associate Llewellyn Jewitt made a watercolour of the site, and like Bray shows it to be virtually circular with high banks on all sides[3] (Plate 1). The present house, Eastwood, is not recorded in either of these drawings although it is clear that the farmhouse dates back to the later medieval period, if not earlier.[4] In 1860 Sir Gardner Wilkinson noted in the *Reliquary* that its position and entourage favoured it being British. Moreover, he pointed out its relationship to Carl Wark (the hillfort above Stanedge Edge) and suggested that Camp Green guarded the western (Hope) valley and communicated with the heights of Eyam Moor, all of which were masked from Carl Wark.[5] On a visit to the site in July 1889 members of the British Archaeological Society recorded that it was in a fragmentary condition.[6] This point was also made in the *Victoria County History* where it was classed as a simple enclosed camp, and where the earlier descriptions and conjectures were disregarded.[7]

More recently, D. J. Cathart King and Leslie Alcock have included it in their survey of Norman ringworks in England and Wales.[8] This survey undertaken in the 1960's was part of the changing attitude towards the multitude of simple earthworks like this one which had been poorly documented. In their study they classed Camp Green in the simplest category, class A, as one of the four examples from Derbyshire, noting, incidentally, its poor state of preservation.

The surviving earthworks hardly resemble the sketches made by Bray and Jewitt, but the sketch plan in the *Victoria County History* made seventy years ago differs little from that made in 1977 (Fig. 2). The best-preserved section of rampart encloses the modern garden of Eastwood, while the northeast quadrant has been cut not only by the track leading up to the moors, but more recently by the neighbours to one side of Eastwood

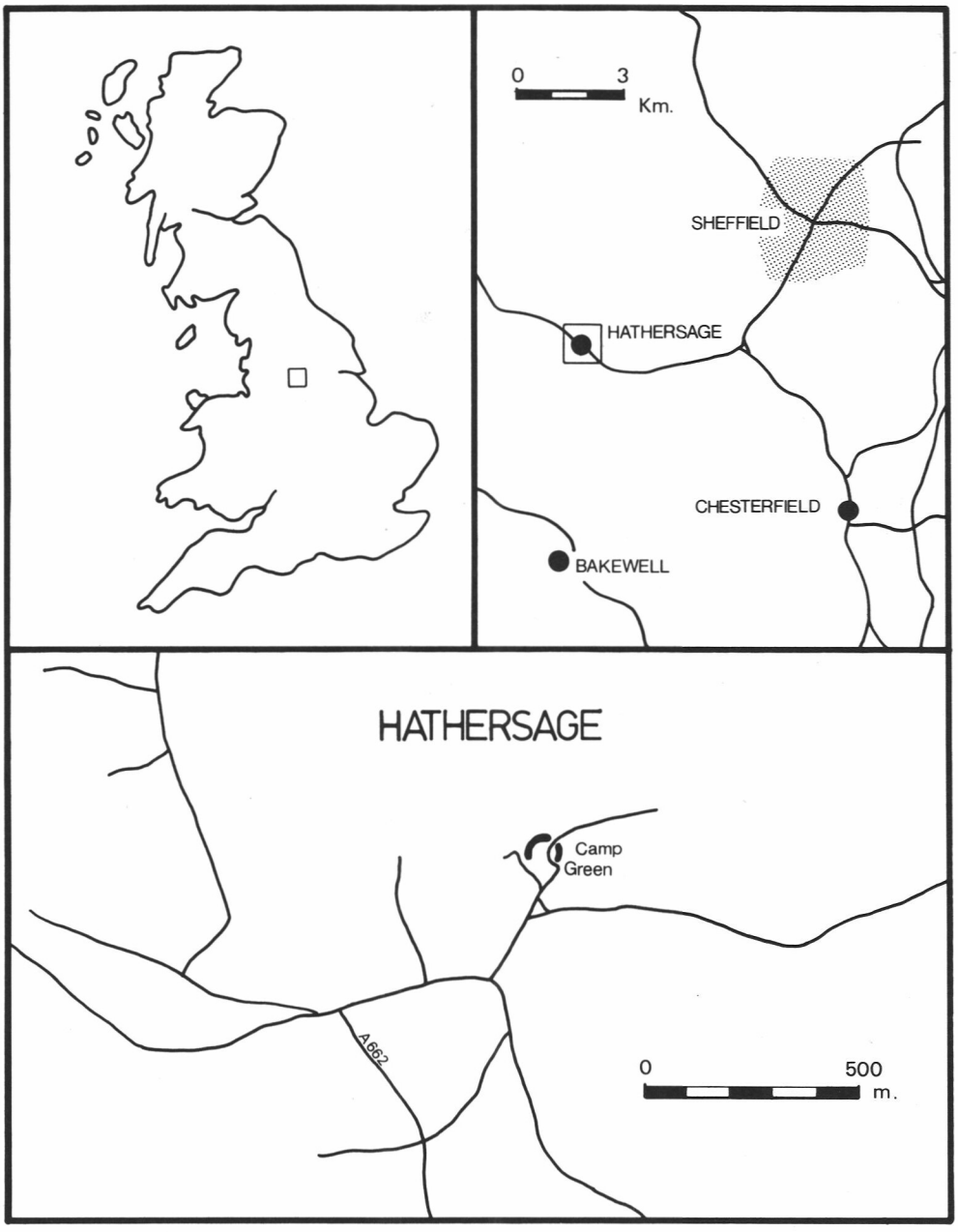

Fig. 1 The location of Camp Green

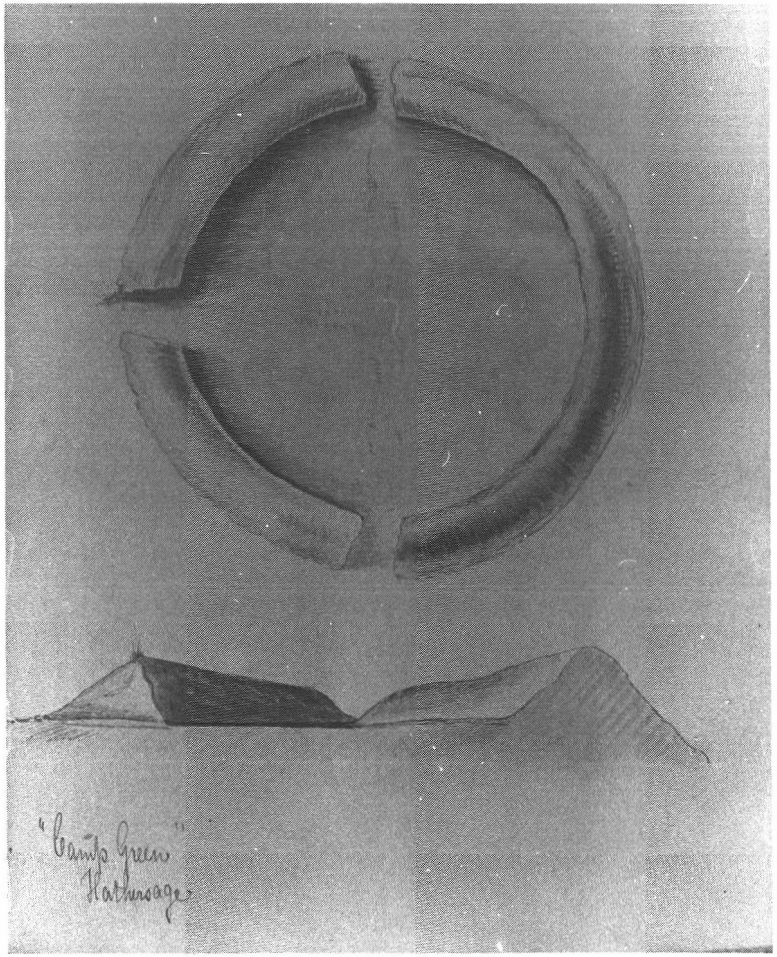

Plate 1 Llewellyn Jewitt's plan of Camp Green.

Plate 2 The cutting into the ditch (May, 1977).

who needed more access to their ground. The southern half of the circle no longer survives, although it is possible that a break in slope in the front garden of Eastwood marks the original line of the rampart and ditch. This is tentatively sketched on in Figure 2. Bray calculated that the interior was about 144 feet in diameter, while later writers described it as 200 feet in diameter when the ditches were included. This makes it a large ringwork by the standards described by Cathart King and Alcock, but far too small to be an iron age hillfort, for example.

The excavations: 1976–1977

Two trenches were excavated, the first during the course of the winter of 1976–77, the second during May 1977.

Trench 1 was seven metres square and located due north of the present house (Fig. 2). It was here that the present owners wished to create a vegetable garden with imported soil. The position of this trench, roughly in the centre of the ringwork, was aimed at finding any medieval structures such as those found in other ringworks excavated in recent years.[9]

Despite optimal conditions for tracing timber buildings, no medieval features or debris were found. The excavation instead revealed a post-built extension to Eastwood which was probably constructed either late in the nineteenth century or early in this one, and possibly destroyed soon after the last war. The extension was constructed on gritstone post-pads and it had a rough cobbled floor. The *terminus post quem* was provided by a souvenir teapot from Torquay of 1940's vintage (or possibly 1950's)!

It appears that this building had been constructed on a levelled surface, and that this was responsible for removing all earlier features which might have existed on the shale natural at this point. The depth of soil was very shallow and never exceeded half a metre, which accounts for the absence of earlier material.

Trench 2 consisted of a cutting fifteen metres long and one and a half metres wide through the north-facing rampart and the ditch below (Fig. 3). The excavation revealed about half of the ditch and the vestiges of the rampart which had been revetted on its inner side by a dry-stone wall.

After the removal of the topsoil (1) the rampart was found to be composed of several fine layers of shale of which only numbers 12 and 15 were clearly distinguishable. These had been capped by a layer of loose rubble gritstones which had been exposed in some places as soon as the turf was removed. Whether this was the top of the rampart (which would have been only about 1.20 metres above the internal ground surface of the ringwork) or simply another layer of material was not clear. However, it was clearly a definite layer presumably to stabilise the bank, and might possibly have been the basis of a wall.

At the back of the rampart was a dry-stone wall that had been built up from the natural. Only one course of this wall had survived due to post-medieval robbing within the ringwork (layer 4). Moreover, it had been heightened in recent centuries by the addition of several crudely hewn stones (not illustrated). When the wall was removed, however, it was discovered that its north face was neatly squared, as though the wall had been built first and then a fine layer of shale thrown up against it. There was no evidence of a wall trench on its northern side to suggest it was a later insertion, and, in fact, layer 13 bonded into the wall confirming some close contemporaneity between the wall and the rampart. The discovery of this wall suggests that the bank was originally about five metres wide, but unfortunately the height of the rear of the rampart is not known.

Excavation within the ditch revealed several phases of use (Plate 2; Fig. 3).

1. The first ditch was probably a shallow V-shaped one, marked on Figure 3 by the dashed line.
2. The first ditch almost certainly silted up as it served as a water course, so it was re-cut thus creating a step in the side. This ditch had silted up (layer 11) and half way up it was found a solitary sherd of medieval green-glazed pottery. To begin with this silting was a fine grey colour, about ten centimetres deep, then it became a light brown silt with occasional stones in its upper part.

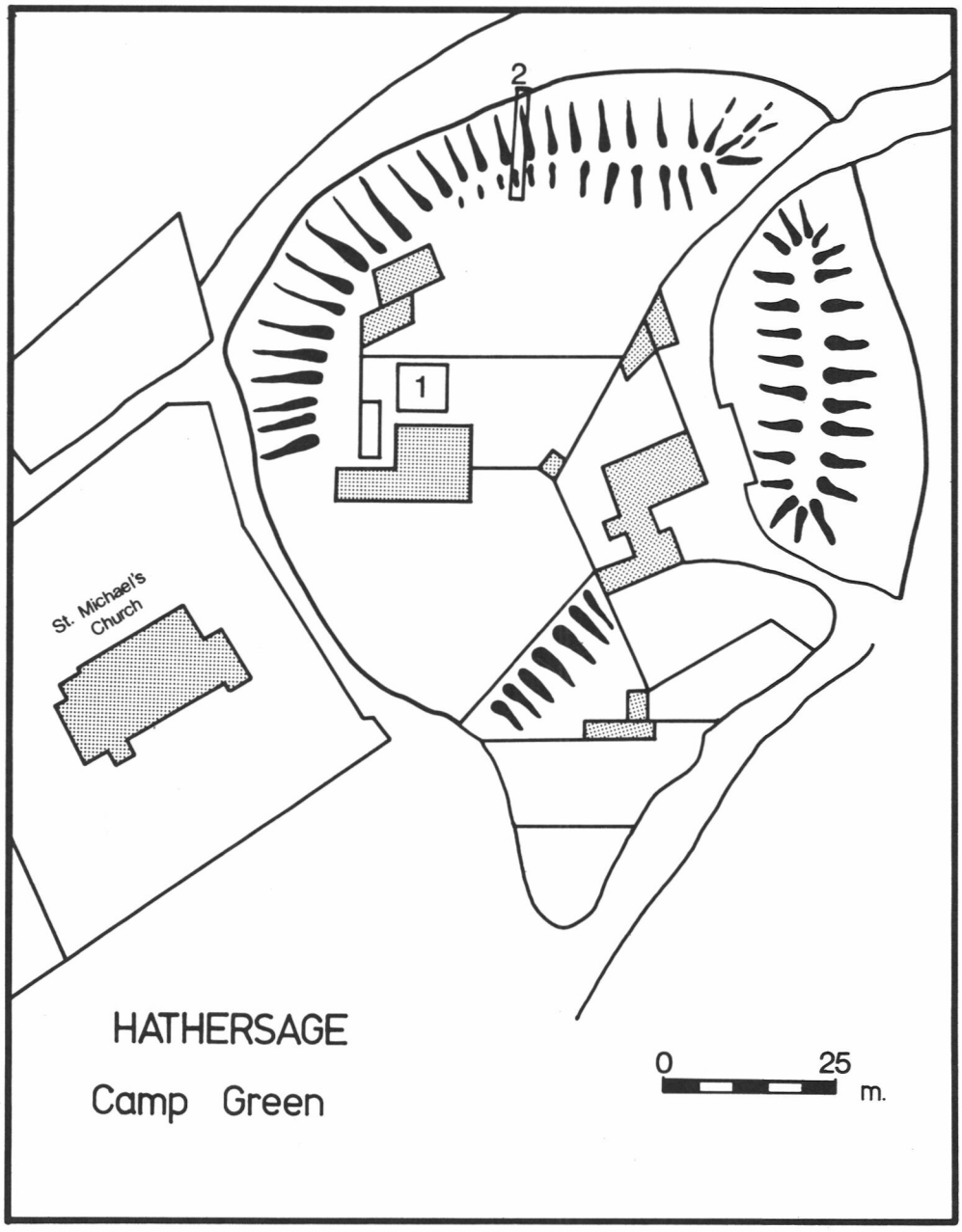

Fig. 2 Sketch plan of the ringwork, showing the two trenches excavated. North is at the top of the plan.

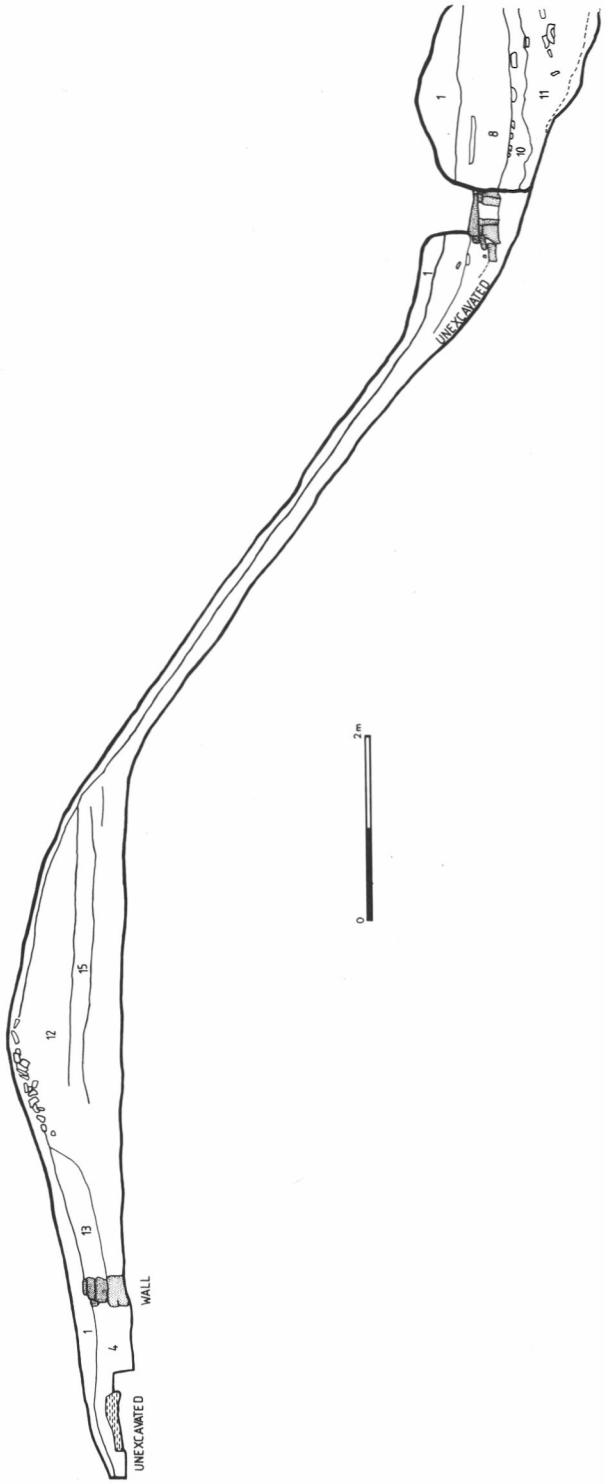

Fig. 3 Camp Green, Trench 2: west section through the rampart (see text for layer descriptions).

3. After some period of disuse during which time silting (11) had become a light orange to yellow silt (10), a cobbled surface was laid down. These stones were packed on top of layer 10. This may have been a pathway or alternatively a watercourse.
4. After the surface, 10, had long gone out of use, and another iron-stained silt deposit had built up (8), a drain constructed of dressed gritstone slabs was cut down through the ditch. As no finds were recovered the date of this drain remains unknown, although it is almost certainly a recent feature. This had gone out of use in modern times, and the process of silting was continuing after heavy downpours, several of which occurred during the period of excavation.

The ditch, then, had been cleaned out once and re-cut before finally silting up. The sherd of Brackenfield pottery from the upper part of this silting (11) suggests that the process was well in train by the fourteenth century. However, no great emphasis can be placed on this solitary chronological fix.

In conclusion, Trench 2 has shown that the rampart was probably five metres across and was revetted on its inside. The exact height of the rampart remains uncertain, but it was at least 1.20 metres high. The shale make-up of the rampart almost certainly came from the initial digging of the shallow V-shaped ditch. This ditch was possibly about three metres broad, and was once re-cut before falling out of use.

Finds

1. A fragment of a gritstone quern was found in the rubble capping of the rampart.
2. A sherd of Brackenfield ware. The sherd is very abraded, and has the remains of a green glaze on the outside. The fabric is soft and sandy; it varies from light grey (Munsell 10 YR 7/1) to pinkish white (Munsell 5 YR 8/2) and contains ill-sorted, rounded grains of iron ore ranging from 0.5–2.00 mm in size occurring in some number. Brackenfield ware was identified following the discovery of two kilns in 1972; this village lies between Alfreton and Matlock, about 20 miles from Hathersage. These wares have been tentatively attributed to the fourteenth century.[10] Other examples are known from the unpublished groups of material found at Peveril Castle, Castleton during clearance excavations and now in Sheffield City Museum.

DISCUSSION

The date of this monument has not been clearly proven, and technically it might still be possible to dispute whether Camp Green was constructed by Britons, Danes, Anglo-Saxons or Normans. However, the survey by Cathart King and Alcock provides nearly two hundred parallels for this kind of site, nearly thirty of which have been excavated and shown to be post-Conquest in date. For several reasons discussed below, a Norman date would seem probable, and in the light of recent research a pre-Conquest date would now seem rather improbable.

Norman fortification in the Peak District can now be summarised as follows:

Stone-built castles

1. Peveril Castle, Castleton, founded soon after the Conquest and greatly enlarged in the reign of Henry II.[11]

Motte and baileys

1. 'Castle Hill', Bakewell: excavated by M. J. Swanton and attributed to the twelfth century; very little found.[12]
2. Pilsbury Castle: a well-preserved motte and bailey (or two baileys) in the Dove valley.[13]

Ringworks

1. Camp Green
2. Hartington: 'Banktop' near the village is a small example enclosing a platform about twenty metres across.[14]
3. Harthill: 'Castle Hill' overlooking Youlgreave is a well preserved univallate enclosure with an interior about 46 metres in diameter. This has often been attributed to the Iron Age, but its size and the frequency of ringworks in contrast to the paucity of iron age material from the Peak District suggests a medieval date.[15]
4. Hassop Moss: a ringwork high on the moors near Glossop; its location, however, is a most unusual one for a Norman-period site and this must cast doubt on the traditional dating of this site.[16]
5. Hope: sometimes known as the 'Folly', this ringwork has been mostly eroded by the River Noe; Cathart King and Alcock classified it as a raised ringwork rather than a motte and bailey. This was almost certainly the site of the manor referred to in Domesday Book, and possibly the earthen structure was raised above the late saxon royal manor built here in the 10th century.[17]
6. Pilsbury: it is my contention that the southern bailey pre-dates the motte and western bailey, and that this was almost certainly an earlier ringwork.[18] This ringwork would have been about 30 metres in diameter.
7. Stoney Middleton: Castle Hill encloses a flat platform that is oval in plan and ranges from twelve to 23 metres in diameter.[19]
8. Tissington: due north of the church is a small earthwork likened by Cox to that at Camp Green; it is scarcely more than 25 metres in diameter.[20]

Camp Green, then, is not an isolated monument but one of a number known from the Peak part of Derbyshire. The hierarchy of settlement is perhaps reflected in the different types of fortifications erected in the Norman period involving different magnitudes of energy input.[21] However, it is not possible to distinguish between the ringworks themselves and thus imply that Hathersage, for example, was of major importance being the largest ringwork, because each site has been simply tailored to its topography. Moreover we have to beware of regarding all these sites as contemporary monuments, or as unified in one defensive policy. Swanton has suggested that Castle Hill, Bakewell, was constructed during the civil war between Stephen and Matilda, while Castleton and Pilsbury probably evolved structurally during the later eleventh or twelfth centuries.

It can, however, be asserted justifiably that most of these fortifications were a response to a political context. In particular, the prevalence of entries indicating waste land in Domesday Book attests the harrying of the Peak by William I in 1068 and 1069. In Derbyshire as a whole 43 villages were still totally waste and another 25 partly waste in 1086. These villages tend to concentrate on the marginal uplands, and emphasise William's policy of concentrating potentially rebellious hill-farmers in nucleated settlements.[22] This was not only an effective colonial policy, but it also enabled manorial estates to be more efficiently administered. There is little doubt, therefore, that these ringworks were bastions of the Conquest, and often located in unsettled areas to control the farming of the best available land. Ringworks were quickly and cheaply raised and effective enough to deter even armies in the short term. Once the colonists had merged into the community, then very often the value of maintaining a defensive ring around a manor was unwarranted. By the thirteenth century in most areas the local power of the manor was not in doubt, although political skirmishes in some parts of England after *c.* 1300 led to the construction of moats around manors.

The Peakland ringworks would seem to have been a short-term response to controlling the newly concentrated hill-farmers, and the homes of the men whose immediate goal was to increase the output of their fiefs. Camp Green was located at the eastern end of one of the richest valleys in the Peak, and close to quern-quarries that had been exploited in Saxon times and were used in the later medieval period as well.[23] Its position was a key one, commanding the routes across to Sheffield, as was that of Hope and Castleton in the centre and at the other end of the valley respectively; while manors

at Stoney Middleton and Bakewell controlled the rich farmland running down the valley to the south. The Norman impact upon the Peak landscape cannot be denied.

At Domesday the Manor was in the hands of Ralph Fitzhubert who owned extensive estates around Crich in the centre of Derbyshire.[24] Fitzhubert had been granted the lands of Levenot and Leuric after the Conquest and it appears that these brothers had jointly owned Hathersage (*Hereseige*) in Edward the Confessor's reign. The manor also possessed four berewicks: at Bamford, Upper Hurst, Offerton and at Stoney Middleton, and it is clear that while arable crops were the main interest of the estate, pigs were kept and some emphasis was placed on timber.[25] How long the manor remained in Fitzhubert's hands is not known. Cox in his monumental study of Derbyshire churches believed it may have passed to the Basset family in the early twelfth century, and it was probably Richard Basset, grandson of a knight who came with William, who founded the church of St. Michael's.[26] Cox suggests that the manor then passed to the Longford family, who held it for most of the later medieval period. When the lands of Sir Thomas Fitzhubert were divided up in the 1650's Camp Green was then a farm called Eastwood, one of three in Hathersage. In 1655 its occupant was Francis Bingham, whose paddock seems to have maintained the plan of the earthwork.[27] Just over a century later, Bray drew this site for the first time.

In conclusion, like the Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian writers who have also paused at this site, I have chosen to consider it within a contemporary paradigm. Their's caused them to attribute it to the Britons and the Danes; today a Norman date seems more probable. But, sadly, it remains only a probability, since the excavations failed to find very much, and the strength of our interpretation rests on the parallels from Derbyshire and elsewhere in England showing Camp Green to be typical of the Norman knight's prize after his victory at Hastings.

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[7] J. C. Cox (1905) Ancient Earthworks. *Victoria County History, Derbyshire* 1: 372. (hereafter Cox, 1905).
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[9] Cf. Cathart King and Alcock, n.8 above.
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[15] Cox, 1905: 371–372; see C. F. Hawke Smith (1979) *Man-Land Relations in Prehistoric Britain*: 185–187 (B.A.R. 64) discussing the absence of iron age sites in this area.
[16] *ibid.*, 371 (figure: p. 370).
[17] Cathart King and Alcock, 1969: 112—their class D, a classification disputed by R. A. Brown (1976)

English Castles: 229, n.2. For the pre-Conquest charters see: C. R. Hart (1975) *The Early Charters of Northern England and the North Midlands*, Leicester.

[18] Hodges, 1978, in n.13.

[19] C. Hart, 1981, in n.14.

[20] Cox, 1905: 374.

[21] B. K. Davison (1972) Castle Neroche: an abandoned Norman fortress in South Somerset. *Proc. Somerset Archaeol. and Nat. Hist. Soc.* 116: 16–58, who estimates the time and effort needed to construct a motte. K. J. Barton and E. Holden (1977) Excavations at Bramber Castle, Sussex, 1966–67. *Archael. J.* 134: 11–79 (esp. 69–70) show that 100 men for about 7½ months may have been required. A ringwork was clearly a more modest labour investment.

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[24] Stenton, 1905: 349; J. C. Cox (1877) *The Churches of Derbyshire* 2: 227–228. Chesterfield.

[25] Holly, 1962: Fig. 74: see n.22 above.

[26] Cox, 1877: 227–228, as in n.24.

[27] Meredith, 1970, as in n.4.