

ART. X.—*Bloomeries in Eskdale and Wasdale. Part 2.*

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IN the Wasdale valley are six bloomeries which do not appear to have been noted in these *Transactions*, namely, Broad Span, Smithy Beck, Cinderdale Bridge, Gaterigghow, Farwell Hill and Mecklin Beck. Of these Cinderdale slagheap has been known of for many years; Broad Span was found later, the other four being first noted by Dr. Parker.

## I. BROAD SPAN, NETHER WASDALE.

Broad Span is the name given to the lowest reach of Wastwater where the boats are kept. A few yards below this at the point where lake merges into river, a tiny, ruinous old landing stage or loading wharf for boats still exists on the south bank, jutting out into the water. Adjoining it is a large double slag-heap twelve yards across and about six feet high. One side runs down into the Irt, the waterworn débris in the river strongly resembling the volcanic rock of which the summit of Sca Fell Pike is composed. There are other slag-heaps dotted along the river-bank vicinity, and in addition to scattered slag, there are fragments of rude masonry in the little wood a short distance along the river on the same shore.

The ore for these workings was probably obtained from Hall Ghyll, a great rift in the fell side above the site, from which good "smit" (red oxide) is still to be had. Water power from the river. Good natural draught. No hearth can now be traced.



BROAD SPAN, WASTWATER. (The ancient boat landing.)

Photo. by Miss M. C. Fair, December, 1923. tcwaas\_002\_1925\_vol25\_0012

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Being the nearest to the source of ore this is probably the oldest of the Wasdale bloomeries.

## 2. SMITHY BECK.

About half way up the north side of Wastwater, Smithy Beck runs into the lake a quarter of a mile above the guide-post. Some 80 yards north-west of the road and close to the south bank of the little stream are seven mounds of slag, covering a space approximating 24 by 16 yards. Tradition says that the ore got from the Screes in Hall Ghyll was conveyed up the lake to this site from the Broad Span loading jetty by boat, and the last time this was done the boat was torn from her moorings and sunk by a violent storm. It would seem probable that when the smelters had burnt all the wood growing near to Broad Span they took the ore to this place up the lake where in bygone times there was plenty of fuel. Good natural draught. The water power here is slight and would have to be conveyed some distance in troughs.

## 3. CINDERDALE, NETHER WASDALE.

At Rowan wood Greendale Beck divides, the two branches running in diametrically opposite directions; Countess Beck flows east into the lake, Cinderdale Beck west into the Irt. The latter is crossed by the road leading to Wastwater a little east of the village of Nether Wasdale.

By the roadside north of Cinderdale Bridge is a gravel pit close to which is a small gate in a field wall. Through this gate is a slag-heap which has been dug into but of which sufficient traces still remain to indicate a large dump. Slight water power. No natural draught.

## 4. GATERIGG HOW, IRTON.

Opposite Peagill on the road from Gosforth to Wasdale, a lane turns off at right angles which crosses the Irt, going to Gaterigghow Farm. About 100 yards north-east of the barn, in a line between it and the How itself, is a mound entirely composed of slag, about 12 feet high and 20 yards long. Upon it grow three trees, one of which is of

great size, suggesting a considerable age for these workings. There is no water nearer than the river 120 yards away, but the heap stands upon the well-defined ancient bank or river-terrace suggesting that the bloomery was in activity before the river changed its course. No natural draught or signs of hearth.

#### 5. FARWELL HILL, IRTON.

From Gaterigg How a farm road runs in a southerly direction past Wright How Crag. A little further on, it passes a wood on the right hand or west side which is Farwell Hill. Halfway past the wood the lane makes a bend: 20 yards north of this angle on the edge of a craggy rise in the wood are two small slag-heaps, difficult to find and overgrown with bramble and coppice, but quite definitely slag. No draught or water power.

#### 6. MECKLIN BECK, IRTON (Santon Bridge).

From Farwell Hill a lane runs south-west leading directly to Gill House nearly a mile away. The house stands by Mecklin Beck, a tributary of the Irt, and half a mile north of Santon Bridge. Opposite to it is a plank bridge which leads through a gateway into a field which has been ploughed. Here, alongside a little stream running into Mecklin Beck, is plenty of slag which is also scattered over the field. Poor water power. Good natural draught.

*Note by M. C. Fair.* Dr. Parker read his notes on these bloomeries at Carlisle, 15th April, 1909. I have—since the war—carefully considered these Wasdale bloomeries, here and there adding a trifling point from my own observation. But the paper to all intents and purposes is Dr. Parker's work, merely confirming on my part his accurate and careful notes on the subject.

The photograph of Broad Span was taken in fulfilment of a promise made to Dr. Parker before the war to obtain for him a pictorial record of the crumbling Boat Landing.