

ART. XVI.—*A Group of Remains near Eskdale Green.*
By M. C. FAIR.

SOUTH-WEST of the village of Eskdale Green, south-east of the eastern slope of Muncaster Fell, there lies a group of remains which suggests archaeological interest, and it is felt might be placed upon record before they disappear beneath an ever-encroaching jungle of bracken which threatens to swallow up much of what was once old pasture with areas of arable patches.

Some of these remains are sited round about an eminence known as Rabbit How which is $\frac{1}{8}$ of a mile south of the modern house called Forest How. North-east of Rabbit How, partly upon its slope, are extensive remains of iron-smelting activity in the form of mounds of slag (which have been greatly scattered and dispersed during the last few years by poultry), a couple of hearths, heaps of earth reddened by iron-ore, and a stream which looks as if it had in the far distant past been artificially constructed from a small pool (now a bog) on the north-west of Rabbit How to supply water for the smelting operations. One of the hearths has been partly formed of living rock round which walling has been erected, now in ruins. The flue has fallen in within the last fifteen years, and a crab-apple tree grows out of it, the ruin completed by the activities of the poultry housed upon the site. Formerly the floor of this hearth was red with traces of ore, and there were fragments of Roman firebrick (probably brought from the Roman tile and pottery works about a mile and a half away down the Muncaster Private Drive) and traces of oxide puddle luting. Running across an adjacent peat bog is an ancient bank which may have

enclosed the bloomery site; within its bounds are many small fragments of charcoal and iron ore.

West of Rabbit How are foundations of an ancient homestead (A), through which runs a track leading up from another homestead site (B) which is east of Rabbit How, and from which a hollow way sweeps up on the eastern flank of Rabbit How, passing to the north through the bloomery site, and going west of Forest How just beyond which it turns west to pass down to the valley of the Mite where it goes to Muncaster Mill with a branch joining a track from Irton to go up the fell again to Muncaster.

This hollow-way where it sweeps up from homestead site B is bordered by extremely large stones; it passes beneath a cleared platform or terrace on the eastern side of the hill; Rabbit How itself appears to be artificially scarped in places suggesting the possibility of its having been some kind of look-out post as Hardknott Pass is visible from it. Newtown Knott above the Roman Fort at Ravenglass is not visible from Rabbit How, but signals made from Newtown Knott by smoke or fire can be easily picked up from Bull Cop $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south of Rabbit How the traditional Roman Road from Ravenglass into Eskdale passing just north of Bull Cop, the latter being clearly in view of Rabbit How.

Homestead A consists of a long building about 50 ft. long and 18 ft. wide, the walls 2 ft. 6 ins. wide of rough walling built into the living rock at its east end. There are two enclosures in this long building, one very much larger than the other. Bracken prevented the taking of exact measurements. South of this long building is a smaller one, also partly built into a mass of living rock.

West of this is a walled garth, the north wall of which is a great outcrop of living rock, completed by a rampart with rounded angles, 3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft. wide, a track passing through what may have been a gateway between the



Site of traditional Roman road from Ravenglass, at its entrance into Eskdale above Muncaster Head.

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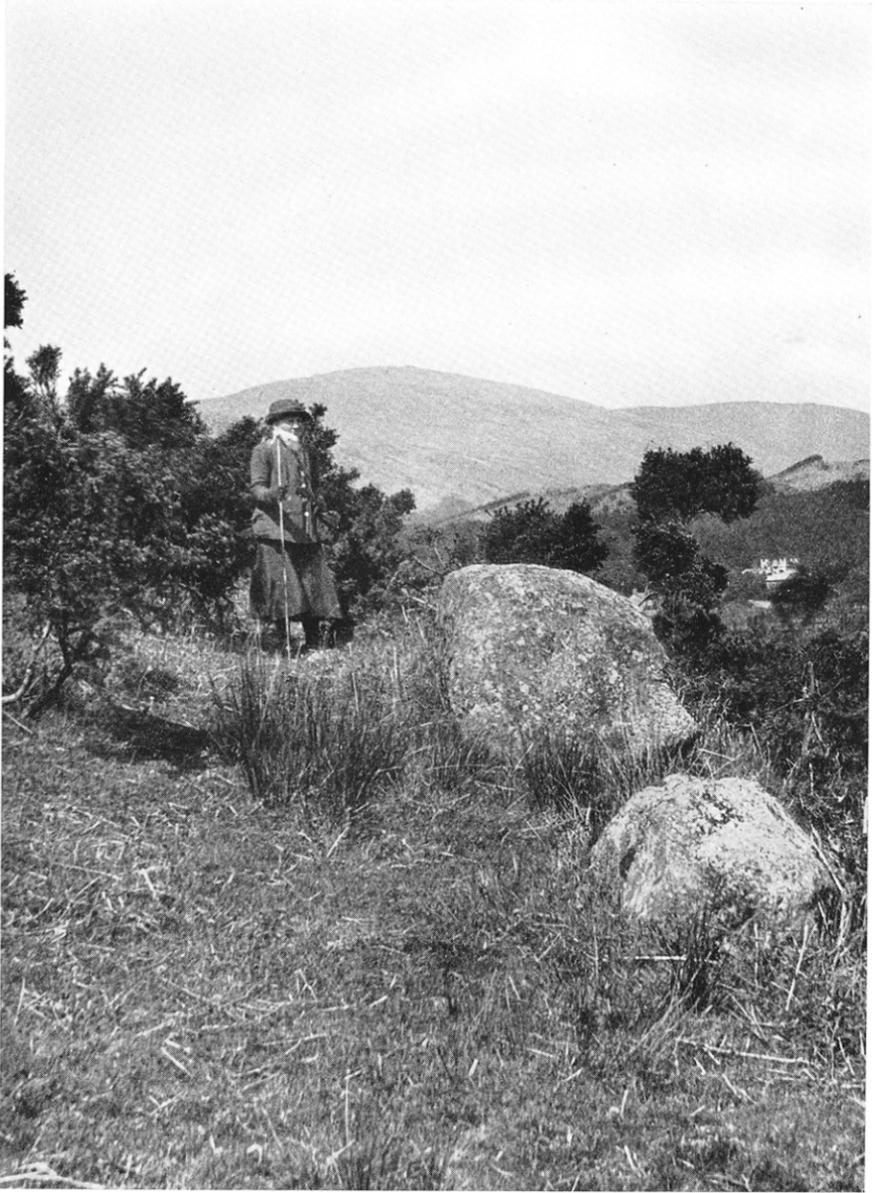
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enclosed garth (whose walls are about 30 ft. by 38 ft.) and the other two buildings. South of the homestead is a terrace of what has been cultivated ground; to the north is the pool now bog which feeds the bloomery stream, while at the south-west is an extensive bog which has also I think been formerly a tarn, round the fringe of which the Roman Road swings up the hillside towards Eskdale.

East of Rabbit How where the Roman Road comes down the slope from Bull Cop, are foundations of another homestead or succession of homesteads; a gateway of heavy stones to which a ramp leads from the bloomery site, a confused network of small buildings, and a long building beside the Roman Road divided into a large and a much smaller section; on this site when a ferret was being dug out many years ago some tiny fragments of Roman coarse pottery and also mediaeval sherds of the same sort as that found in the Eskmeals Sandhills occupation site were brought to light together with a Lancaster halfpenny. At the other side of the Roman Road above the great hollow behind Muncaster Head Farm, is a charcoal-burning pitstead beneath the turf. The Roman Road winds at the lip of the great hollow which must have been a tarn in ancient days, till it reaches woods and heads towards Hardknott Pass up Eskdale; where it passes Homestead B, it is bordered with big stones; at this woodland a hollow way branches off pointing south and leading over what is now known as "Forge Hills" to a second important and extensive bloomery site where again Roman firebrick and traces of luting-clay were found. An artificial canal has been cut from the great hollow behind Muncaster Head Farm leading through this bloomery site direct for the river Esk which it joins just below The Lord's Bridge on the Private Drive, the Drive itself passing through the bloomery workings. Just before the canal joins the river is another small iron-smelting site with luting-clay and slag upon the canal

bank. Dr. Parker records the discovery of a trough with spigot when the Private Drive was made near here, a relic which may possibly have been connected with the bloomery activities.

East of the hollow-way from the Roman Road to the Muncaster Head bloomery site, abutting from Forge Hills to a pasture which was ploughed land many years ago, is what may be a tumulus some 38 ft. in diameter. It is on very sandy soil, and is itself constructed of stones which look to be artificially and carefully arranged and much sand. This mound is inhabited by rabbits which from time to time have been noticed to turn out charcoal from the interior. There is the possibility that the mound may be something connected with either charcoal burning or iron smelting, or it might be of prehistoric origin, the late Mr. W. G. Collingwood who examined it carefully inclining to the latter probability. Dr. Spence also looked at it recently, and considered it might be a tumulus.



Rabbit How, Eskdale.—Ancient Hollow Way.

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