

ART. II.—*Threlkeld Settlement*. By THOMAS HAY.

THE Threlkeld Settlement is one of the best known early sites in our district. It has been mentioned once or twice in our *Transactions* but no map of it has been published there. The unprotected condition of such settlements leaves them open to deterioration if not actual damage. Weather and accident are perpetual sources of further change with the result that as time goes on more and more sections of the original structures will become undecipherable. There seems therefore little need of apology for putting on record the present condition of this striking relic of the past.

The huge quarry at Threlkeld lies some distance south of the village and close beside the railway line. The settlement lies south of the quarry and is easily accessible from the station by ascending the fell that slopes down from Clough Head. This open moor rises in a series of natural terraces facing the north. The first of these constitutes the rock-mass from which the well known microgranite has been quarried. The second forms the shelf on which the ancient village was placed with a magnificent circle of mountains surrounding it and with the Keswick to Penrith through-valley lying at its feet. Westward lies the group of mountains around Grassmoor. After the Bassenthwaite gap there comes the mass of Skiddaw and this is followed by the huge corries and the truncated spurs of Blencathra immediately opposite. Towards the east the high ground about Greystoke leads round to Matterdale Common and the northern end of the Helvellyn range. Truly a panorama fit for the gods.

In 1888 anxiety was felt about the possibility of the destruction of this village site by the development of the quarry. Mr. C. W. Dymond paid a special visit in 1897 to look into this question and his remarks appear in these *Transactions*, o.s. xv. He stated that it would take a generation for the quarrying to reach the settlement at the rate at which they were working then. Incidentally it may be remarked that the compilers of the Westmorland book on Historical Monuments placed a high value on Dymond's accuracy. But I think the best guarantee of the safety of the settlement is that the microgranite dies out before the settlement is reached.

Between the quarry face and the village lies the whole of the first terrace mentioned above and this is occupied by two enclosed fields, parts of which have been cleared and cultivated in the more recent past. These fields bear unmistakable traces of having formed part of the ancient settlement. The western field has been cultivated in parts but it is impossible to date that cultivation. There are poor lynchets and it has been partially cleared although great numbers of the bigger erratics have not been removed. There are several mounds of stone and small boulders looking regular enough to be tumuli but possibly only the result of land clearance.

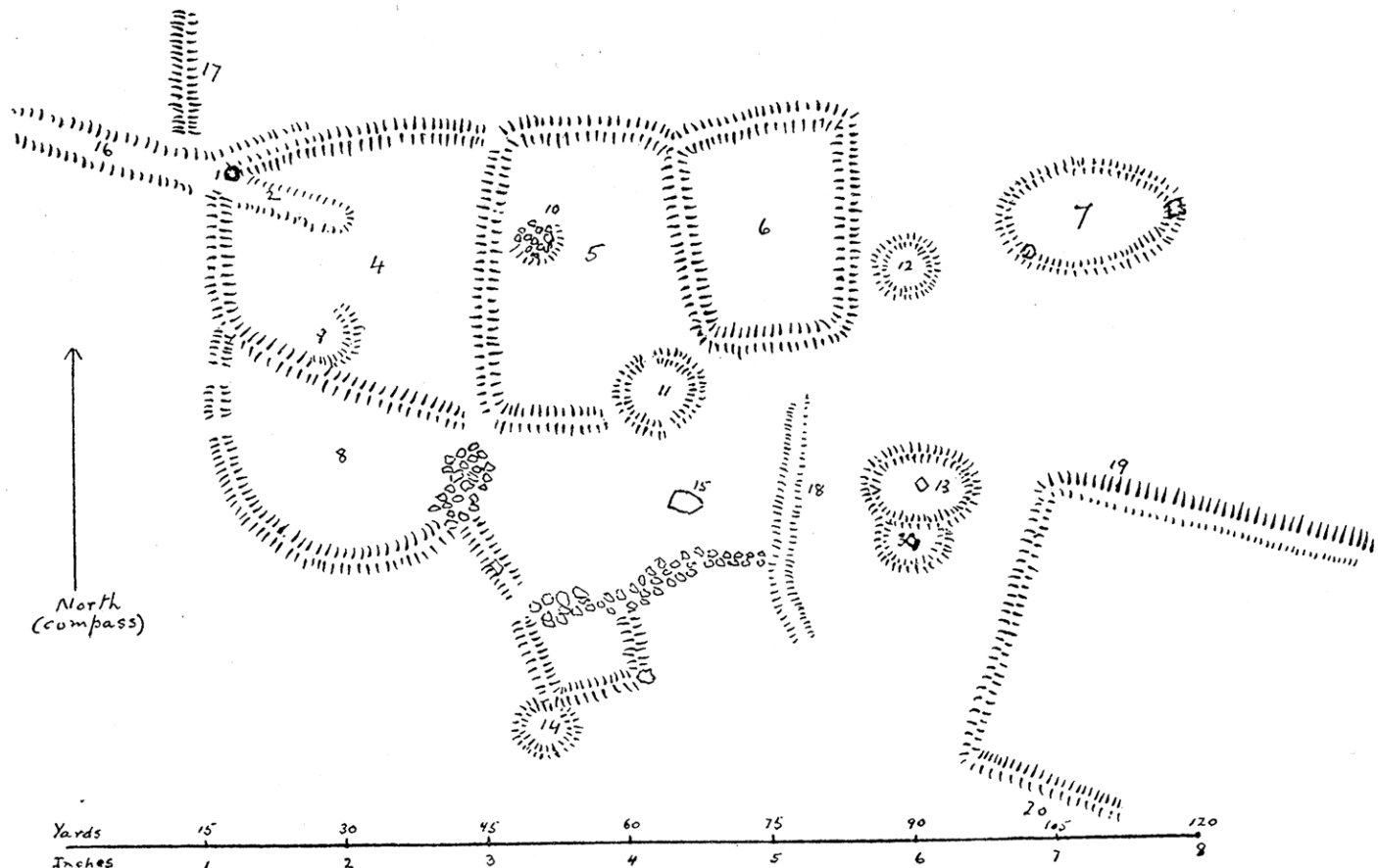
In the eastern field which has been much more thoroughly cleared there are considerable remains of two long orthostatic walls as well as a trackway running down to the south-east corner where water could be got on the fell. All this is interesting as part of the original village system but it would not be an absolute calamity if it had to disappear through renewed activity on the part of the quarry. Between the hill occupied by these two fields and the settlement proper there runs a modern wall, east and west, along the dip between the two natural terraces. Wherever a modern wall has been constructed near an

ancient settlement it is impossible to say how much of the latter has disappeared in the process.

In this dip, occupied by rather damp ground, there is a great number of stone heaps. From their size and shape they might be either land clearance heaps or tumuli and much labour would be needed to excavate such a number of mounds. These particular heaps have no appearance of being hut circles. The steep rise to the south from this low-lying belt brings one at once to the main village. It occupies a comparatively level shelf which has live rock here and there. The whole fellside has been littered with erratics from the Thirlmere glacier and these have provided material for the early builders. The main features of the settlement are shown in the diagram but it must be remembered that much more of great interest is scattered about to the east and south-east of the village itself.

For example, if the trackway out from the east of the village be pursued some distance it will be found passing near a small fold and then ascending a steep slope. It goes much in the same direction as the modern bridle-path which lies higher up and later on runs along the crest of the Wolf Crag moraine and so to Dockray and Douthwaite-head. Again, east of the village there is a great collection of stone heaps, a good deal of old walling and at least one self-contained element consisting of two roughly rectangular enclosures with an accompanying sinking just suitable in size and shape for a hut circle. Indeed in this part of the area amongst the heaps of boulders there are several which bear all the marks of definite hut circles. But after all the centre of interest is the village itself and we may return to it along the old sunken way which passes through a group of particularly huge erratics.

The diagram shows the main parts of the settlement and the following notes should be read in reference to the figure. Numbers 1, 2, 3, are places showing signs of



THREKELD SETTLEMENT.

slight recent excavation. Numbers 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, are enclosures where the old walling sometimes spreads over as much as 13 feet in breadth. Number 9 is half a hut circle while number 10 is a problematical site for another now occupied by boulders. Number 11 is apparently the best and principal hut circle.

Numbers 12 and 14, are two other rather smaller hut circles. Number 15 is a huge erratic. Number 16 is a well made trackway to the settlement approaching from the west with an embankment down on the north side and another up on the south. Number 18 is a track running up the fell at a steep inclination and number 19 is a track and rampart leading out east through the big group of boulders mentioned before and so on to the sunken way.

What strikes one on the actual site and on looking at the diagram is the definite approach to something like regularity presented by the enclosures 4, 5 and 6. Most of the walls are not rectilinear but bulge outwards in slight curves. However the east wall of number 6 has a beautiful straight line of big boulders at its base and its north end is curved round in a regular manner. Much of this may be due to the exigencies of the site but it makes one wonder if there is also the result of some slight acquaintance with Roman methods of arrangement.

Note. After this drawing and paper were finished, Dr. W. Goodchild kindly lent me the 25 inch map of the area which shows the settlement in some detail. It marks the curious double circle at no 13 on my map as a well and certainly the ground there is quite damp.