

Trench across inner vallum, Coneygrey Camp. Looking Westward.



Trench in North-West quarter of Camp. Looking Northward.

The Roman Camp near Coneygreys House, Bentrich.

By WILLIAM SMITHARD.

IN the year 1760, Dr. Pegge walked along the Derbyshire portion of Rycknield Street, so far as it was known, and in his account thereof he made note of a Roman camp on a hill opposite Wingfield Manor, about thirteen miles from Derby. Dr. Pegge mentioned that the camp was square, with a double vallum, and that a Roman coin had been picked up there.

No other information appears to have been recorded about this camp, and as it seemed probable to the writer that some useful particulars would be revealed by careful use of the spade, permission to excavate was obtained, and the work was done in March and May, 1909, under the auspices of the Derbyshire Pennine Club.

The camp is 441 feet above the Ordnance Survey datum. It overlooks the Amber valley, and commands a view of four ridges west thereof. On the lowest ridge is Wingfield Manor House, and on the highest may be seen Crich stand and church. There are also extensive views towards Alfreton, Ashover, and Belper. The hill on which the camp is situated is called Castle Hill, but no traces of a building have been discovered there. It was usual, however, for earthworks to be called castles in many parts of England.

Though the outlines of the camp are not prominent, the double vallum can still be discerned if a close scrutiny is made. The length of the inner vallum is fifty paces in each direction, and the camp is completely grass-grown.

The view northward is now cut off by a wood, and at the north-west corner of the camp the slope of the hill is very steep. The approach to the camp is from the south, along the road at the back of Coneygrey House.

Trenches were made in sundry parts of the camp, and it was ascertained that the average thickness of "made" soil is about two and a half feet. It contained numerous fragments of charcoal and bits of red sandstone. The latter rock is not found naturally near the camp, the nearest outcrop of it being about seven miles away. Possibly, however, the reddening is due to fires in the camp.

Below the dark loamy "made" soil is the natural light coloured dry gritty subsoil formed from the coal measure sandstone.

The greatest depth of "made" soil was about four feet, and this was in the fosse between the inner and outer vallum. The height of the latter above the natural subsoil, viz., two feet nine inches, is now only about three inches above the general level of the camp.

The base of the inner vallum is forty feet wide, and from there to the further edge of the outer vallum base is another thirty feet.

No true masonry was observed, but we discovered two "ribs" formed of unmortared irregular sandstone blocks about a foot long, four inches wide, and three inches thick. These blocks were fitted together firmly and compactly, and the ribs appeared to run longitudinally with the vallum, eighteen inches below the surface, and eight feet apart, *i.e.*, four feet from the centre on each side.

The broken pottery found was mostly close to these "ribs." Mr. John Ward, F.S.A., to whom the writer's best thanks are

due, has kindly examined the fragments and classified them thus:—

Nos. 1 and 8.—Portions of pelvis or mortarium rims. Ordinary type.

Nos. 2, 9, 12, and 13.—Grey ware. Fragments of jars or ollae.

No. 3.—Apparently bowl, or very squat olla.

No. 4.—“Samian” ware (*terra sigillata*), moulded decoration. Part of bowl, perhaps of Dragendorf’s No. 37.

No. 5.—Common red ware.

No. 6.—Fine red ware. Olla of squat form, apparently with cordoned belt.

No. 7.—Common red ware olla lid.

No. 10.—Piece of large vessel, or perhaps smallish amphora. Common red ware (with traces of a deep red wash or engobe).

No. 11.—Coarsish pottery, ornamented with “engine turning.”

No. 14.—Pale red ware.

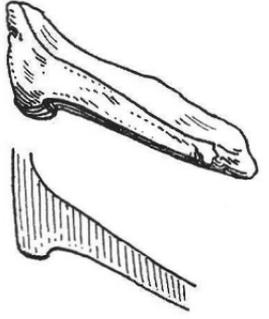
Mr. Ward further remarks that all the fragments are recognizably Roman.

Just under the turf, wherever trenches were cut, was a continuous layer of unmortared paving about an inch thick, formed chiefly of small flat pieces of local sandstone and the red sandstone previously mentioned. One is inclined to think this paving was put down to keep the surface of the camp dry, and to give in wet weather a good footing on gritty stone instead of the slippery soil. There was similar paving on the upper platform at the Rainster Rocks site, referred to on page 127 in Vol. xxxii. of the *Journal*.

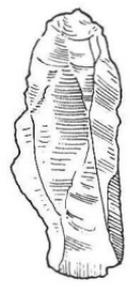
A notable find was a small flint scraper (No. 15) in excellent condition. This is but little thicker than a modern steel knife, and it has several neat notches in its sharp edge, so that it could also be used as a saw. One cannot deduce prehistoric use of the site from a solitary Neolithic implement, but the presence of this scraper may mean that the hill was occupied by man long before the Romans came to the Peak district.

The comparative scantiness of the remains would seem to indicate that the camp was not permanently occupied in Roman times. Probably it was used whilst the adjacent road was being made, and occasionally afterwards. The situation would be too much exposed for regular occupation unless the camp was amply provided with artificial shelter.

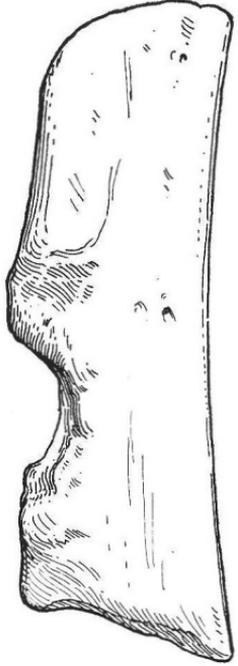
In the work of excavating, valuable assistance was rendered by Messrs. R. M. Archer, W. Boulsover, W. H. Hanbury, J. W. Percival, and J. W. Puttrell. Mr. E. M. Wrench, M.V.O., F.R.C.S., took an interest in the proceedings, and was present when some "finds" were unearthed. For the sketches the writer is much indebted to Mr. Ernest E. Clark. Permission to excavate was very kindly granted by Mr. Atkinson, the former tenant, and Mr. Morten, the present occupier, of Coneygrey House.



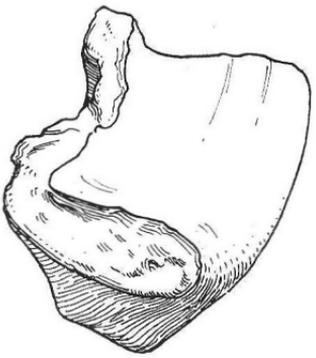
No. 13.



No. 15.



No. 1.



FLINT SCRAPER AND POTTERY FROM CONEYGREY CAMP.



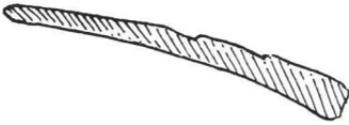
No. 3.



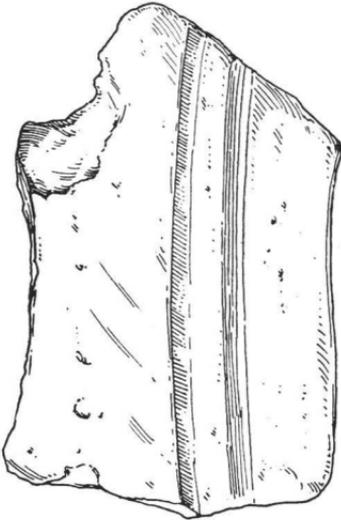
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No. 14.



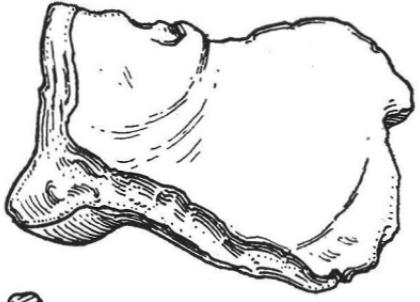
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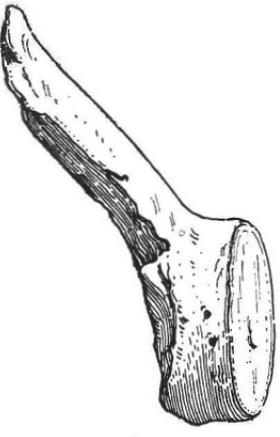
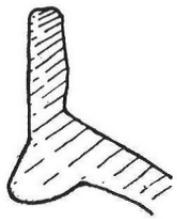
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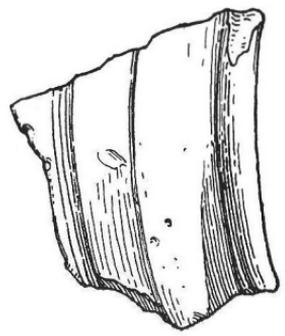
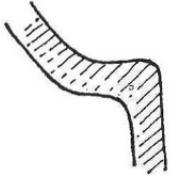
FRAGMENTS OF POTTERY FROM CONEYGREY CAMP.



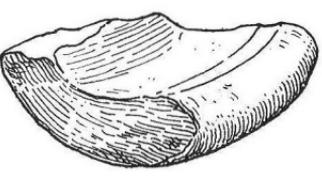
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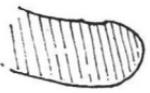
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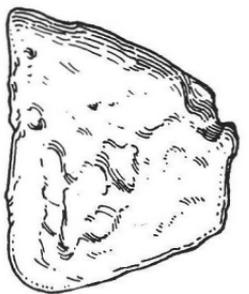
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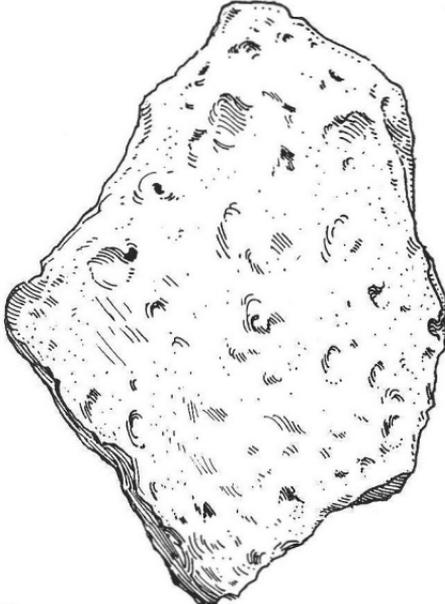
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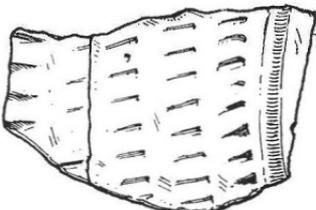
FRAGMENTS OF POTTERY FROM CONEVGREY CAMP.



No. 4.

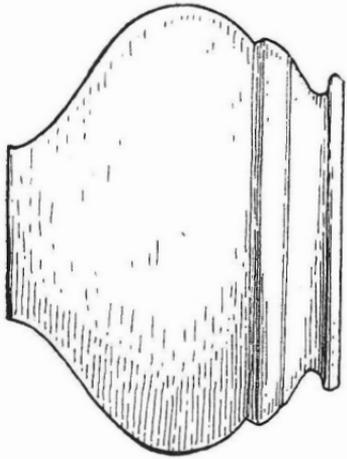


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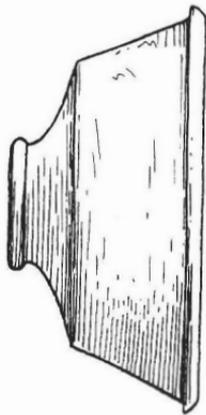


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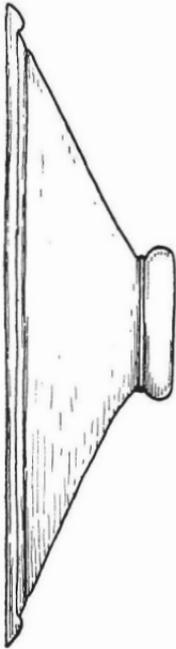
FRAGMENTS OF POTTERY FROM CONEYGREY CAMP.



No. 6.



No. 3.



No. 7.



Conjectural approximate restoration of vessels to which fragments Nos. 6, 3, and 7 belonged.

From Coneysrey Camp, Pentrich.