

Mam Tor Earthwork.¹

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THE celebrated hill known as Mam Tor, which is also locally called "the Shivering Mountain," is situated about a mile to the west of Castleton.

Mr. Frederick Davis, in his paper on the "Etymology of some Derbyshire Place-names," which appeared in our Society's *Journal* for 1880, states that "Mam" is the Celtic for "Mother," and Tor, as we all know, stands for "a projecting or tower-like rock." Mam Tor, therefore, would mean "the Mother Rock." This, it must be allowed, is a most appropriate appellation for a sheltering fort of refuge. But, unfortunately, as frequently happens in the derivation of place-names, the authorities differ. Mr. Sainter, in his *Scientific Rambles Round Macclesfield*, suggests that Mam is probably derived from "mon," "mæn," or "mannin," the Celtic word for "rock." Curiously enough, Justinian Pagett,² who visited Derbyshire in 1630, refers to the hill as "Mantaur."

The name "Shivering Mountain" is attributable to the fact that the middle and lower portions of the hill to the south-east are composed of shale of a crumbling character, which, under the influence of the weather, disintegrates, and slides down the slope. The compact sandstone above, which forms the top of the hill, being deprived of support, breaks

¹ This paper was read at the Annual Meeting of the Society held at Buxton in 1912, prior to the visit by the Society to Mam Tor.

² *Journal* for 1887.

away, and joins the débris at the foot of the precipice. It has been stated that this process is not now in such active operation as formerly.

The summit of Mam Tor rises to a height of about 1,700 feet above the sea level, and the slopes are very steep, except on the north, where Mam Tor is linked to the adjoining hills. Here the road to Edale divides the hills, and affords the easiest approach to the fort.

The ancient inhabitants of the neighbourhood took advantage of the excellent defensive capabilities of Mam Tor to construct on it their fort of refuge. Round the upper slope of the hill, but some distance from the summit, they scarped the slopes to a still steeper angle, and constructed a double rampart, enclosing an area of about 16 acres.

The fort comes within definition "B" of the classification recommended by the Committee on Ancient Earthworks and Fortified Enclosures as a fortress on a hill-top with artificial defences following the natural line of the hill.

An excellent plan, by Mr. Chalkley Gould, of the fort appears in our Society's *Journal* for 1902, and to which reference will be made.

There are two entrances to the enclosure, one on the south at "C" in the plan, which is reached by a path climbing up the steep slope from the valley below, and enters the enclosure a short distance from the precipice at the south-westerly corner. This is undoubtedly an original entrance. The other entrance is at the north-easterly end of the enclosure, at the point marked "B" on the plan. Mr. Chalkley Gould considered that this is not an original entrance, and based his opinion on the weakness of the defence at this point, but suggests that "there must have existed some outer protection, of which no evidence remains, or that some other fort rendered assault at that point unlikely or impossible." This does not seem a very conclusive argument against the entrance being an original one, but the suggestion that there existed some defence which has disappeared is quite probable. A large

majority of fortresses following the line of the hill have at least two entrances, situated at opposite sides of the enclosure. Badbury Rings, near Wimborne, which is often quoted as a typical example, has two entrances so situated.

In the case of Mam Tor, an entrance at the north-easterly end would appear to have been a matter of necessity, if a crowd of men, women, and children, accompanied by herds of cattle, were to obtain speedy access to the fort in time of danger. It seems most probable, therefore, that the principal entrance was situated at "B" on the plan, and that the outer defences of such entrance have disappeared.

There is a spring of water near the north-west side of the enclosure, marked "D" on the plan, which must have been of the greatest benefit after a retreat to the fort had been made and the entrances were blocked in anticipation of an attack from an enemy.

There are two tumuli in the enclosure towards the southerly end. Mr. Bateman, in his *Vestiges of the Antiquities of Derbyshire*, is responsible for the statement that one of these tumuli was opened some years before he wrote, and a brass celt and some fragments of an unbaked urn were found in it.

Our knowledge at present is insufficient to enable us to arrive at any definite decision as to whether this fort dates from the Neolithic or Bronze periods; possibly it may have been utilised as a fortress during both periods. The finding of the brass celt in the tumulus cannot be accepted as evidence, because the tumulus may have been constructed before the fort, or during the time it was occupied as a stronghold, or after it ceased to be so occupied. Mr. Pennington, in his *Barrows and Bone Caves of Derbyshire*, states that "arrow-heads and other articles of flint have often been picked up upon Mam Tor, and especially along the line of the fort," but he gives no description of the arrow-heads so found.

Mr. Bateman expressed the opinion that the ramparts originally extended in an unbroken line round the hill, and that the disintegration of the shale has carried away portions of the

ramparts. Mr. Gould was of the same opinion, but Mr. Andrew, F.S.A., in a footnote to Mr. Gould's paper, contested that view, on the ground that the disintegration of the shale would commence *ab initio*, inferring that, in his opinion, the ramparts were constructed up to the edge of the then existing precipice, which thus formed part of the original defence of the fort. The point is perhaps not a very important one, but it would appear that either view may be correct. If at the date of the construction of the fort the precipices commenced as high up the hill as the line of the ramparts, no doubt Mr. Andrew's view would be correct. But, on the other hand, if at the remote period when the fort was constructed there was a steep slope on the south side of the hill for some distance above the precipice, and extending considerably below the line of the ramparts, then Mr. Bateman's view may be right, and in process of time the precipices may have crept up the hill and carried away the gaps in the ramparts. It should be noticed, however, that the short, single rampart to the west of the southerly entrance, and extending to the south-westerly precipice, rather indicates that a precipice in that direction had formed part of the original defence, but no such indication can be gathered from the ramparts leading up to the south-easterly precipice.

The construction of the defences of Mam Tor was no light work, and the community which carried out the scheme must have been a numerous one, and must have worked systematically under some authority, so that we are justified in concluding that they possessed at least tribal organisation.