

## Archaeological Reports

### A SURVEY OF THE COMBS MOSS HILL-FORT.

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By H. G. RAMM.

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THE accompanying plan of the hill-fort at Castle Naze on Combs Moss is based on a survey made by students of the Summer School, organised by Nottingham University and the Workers' Educational Association, at Buxton in August 1957 (fig. 8). The fort lies about a mile south of Chapel-en-le-Frith South station, from where a footpath runs to join the Doveholes to Combs road immediately north of the fort (SK. 054784).

The high ground of Combs Moss falls away to the west in a precipitous gritstone escarpment eroded into a series of promontories of which Castle Naze is one of the most marked. The fort on its summit has never been methodically explored but a superficial examination indicates three phases of construction, two of the prehistoric Iron Age and the third of late medieval date when engineered packhorse tracks were made to ascend to the moor through the fort (fig. 9).

#### PHASE I.

The triangular area, some two acres in extent, at the tip of the promontory, already defended on two sides by precipitous crags and slopes was secured on the third side by the building of a drystone wall to cut it off from the open moor. This enclosure rises to a maximum height of 1,454 ft. above sea level. The ruins of the defensive wall now form a grass overgrown mound of small gritstone rubble 25-35 ft. wide at base and 7-9 ft. high. A section through the bank is partly exposed at the central gap and a small hole has at some time been dug into its surface.

There was no external ditch in this phase. The south end of the wall rests on the lip of the hill slope; at the north end is a gap which probably represents the original entrance. It is unlikely to have been created by the track of phase III, which uses it, since in its absence the

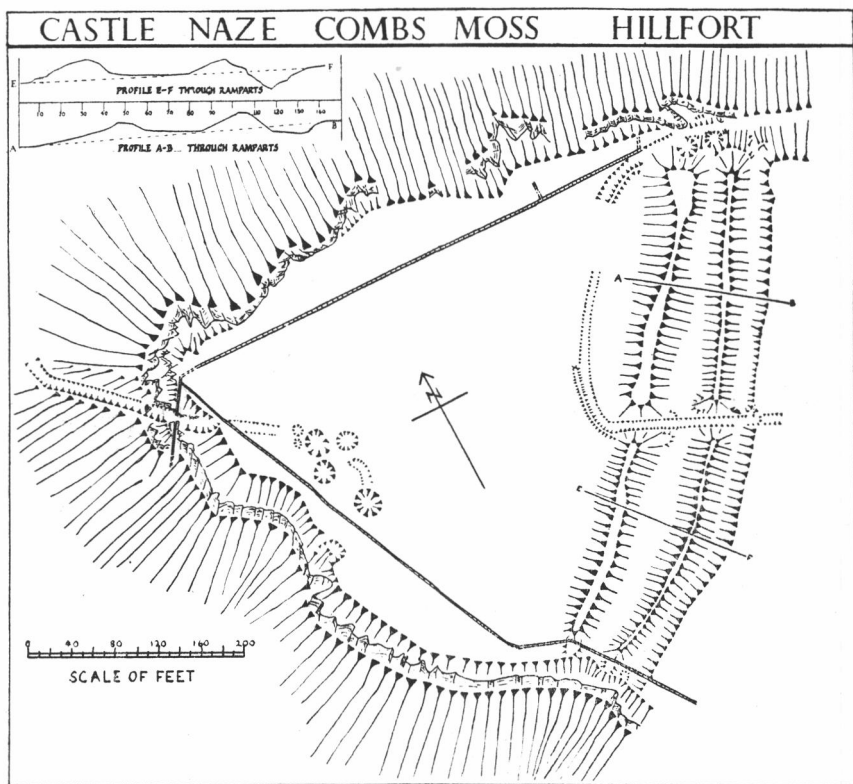


FIG. 8.

builders of the track could readily have passed between the defences of phases I and II without any need to go to the trouble of penetrating those of phase I. That the central gap has been cut through the wall is indicated by the stone debris between the two ramparts.

## PHASE II.

The earlier defences were replaced by a ditch with internal bank set in front of them. The new rampart formed probably from the upcast of the ditch was revetted externally by a drystone wall 3 ft. 6 ins. wide, carefully made from slabs of the local gritstone. Portions of this wall are still visible. The surviving remains of the rampart have a width of 20-30 ft. and a height of 7-12 ft. The ditch is 25 ft. wide and has a depth of up to 5 ft. north of the central entrance and of up to 10 ft. south of the entrance, where its silting has been scoured by water.

Bank and ditch rest at both north and south ends on the lip of the hill slope and the present gap in the centre must represent the original entrance. The later track and water erosion have obscured the evidence here but there are some indications on the north side of an original causeway across the ditch. The cutting of an entrance centrally through the earlier wall must then also belong to phase II.

The reasons for allocating the two ramparts to different periods are firstly the obvious difference in the method of construction employed, and secondly the fact that the inner rampart is dominated by the outer. Even if allowance is made for the possibility that the inner bank may for some reason be more collapsed than the outer, the slope of the ground into the fort makes it almost certain that the inner rampart can never have overlooked the outer. For obvious reasons this is a defensive weakness and invalidates the whole purpose of having more than one bank. The defences of phase II have been built to replace and not to supplement those of phase I.

Whether the enclosure was permanently occupied by a village group or was merely an occasional refuge for the inhabitants of nearby scattered homesteads cannot be said without excavation. There are no superficial indications of any kind within the fort. Certain hollows at the western end are quarries later in date than the tracks of phase III and were presumably dug to supply the stone for the now dilapidated field walls.

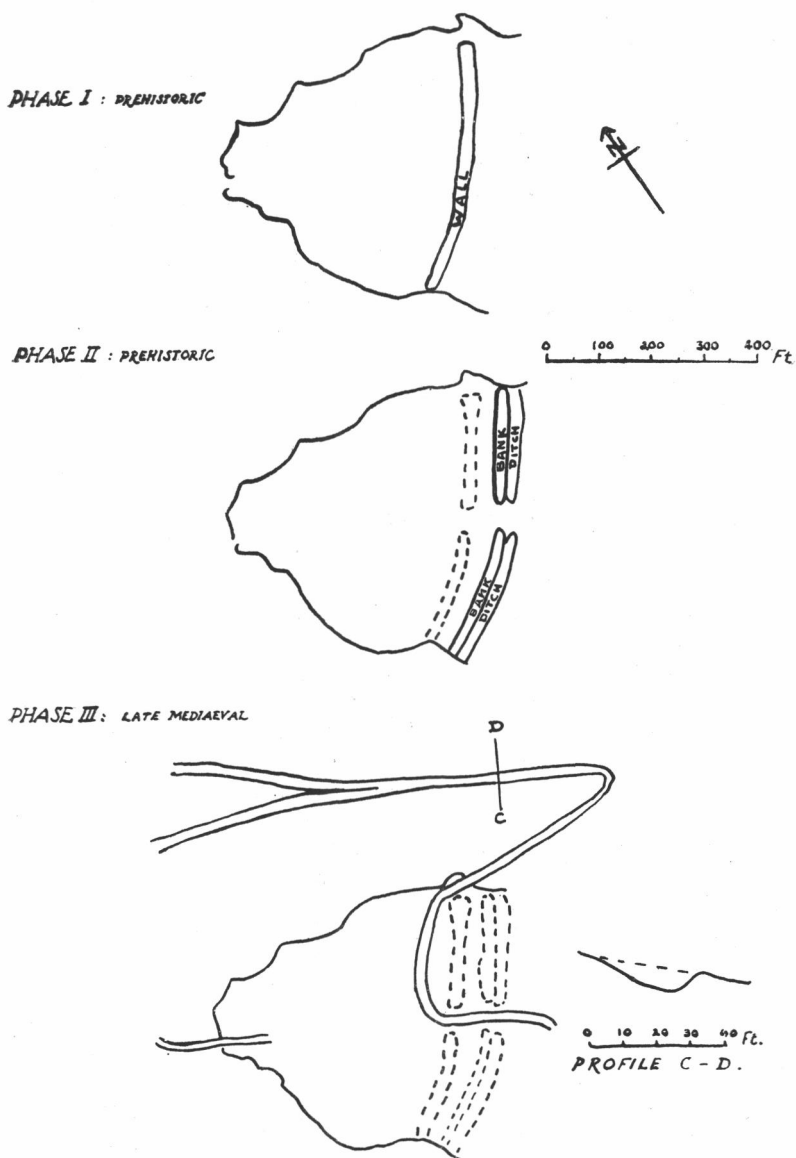


FIG. 9. Combs Moss—Phases of Construction.

## PHASE III.

There is no evidence of any original ascents of the crags during its period of use as a hill-fort. Two finely engineered packhorse tracks of probably late medieval date now ascend into the fort. These tracks are a feature of the gritstone moors of the Peak District. The present example, where best preserved, is 20-30 ft. wide at the top, of V-shaped section, and 10 ft. deep. It has been cut rather than worn. It climbs the hill at an angle to enter the fort within the rampart of phase II. It then passes through the original entrance of phase I, curves back and emerges on to the open moor through the entrance of phase II. A steeper ascent on the west has been utilised by a second track which passes through an artificially widened fissure of the rock. It probably originally joined the other track just inside the defences, but is not now visible beyond the quarries. The other track also is very faint within the enclosure.

## REFERENCES.

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*D.A.J.*, XXIII, 1901, 108; XXIV, 1902, 8; XXXIII, 1911, 3; LXXIV, 1954, 1.

## A SURVEY OF AN EARTHWORK AT KINGSTERNDALE.

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A N earthwork at Kingsterndale was also surveyed by students of the Summer School at Buxton. This work is marked on the Ordnance Survey as an ancient earthwork (SK. 078714). It lies in a pasture field about 2 miles south-east of Buxton and a little to the north of the Buxton-Ashbourne road.

The site is in a broad dry valley running north to south. The earthworks consist of a triangular enclosure based on a long bank, presumably an old field bank, extending to the north-west and south-east. The apex of the triangle is to the south-west. The area enclosed