

V.—THE PRE-HISTORIC CAMPS OF NORTHUMBERLAND.¹

BURGH HILL CAMP; BY R. C. HEDLEY.

[Read on the 27th November, 1889.]

THE Burgh (pronounced 'Bruff') hill is a quarter of a mile west from Great Tosson near Rothbury. Its verdure makes the hill a land-mark on account of the contrast its colour affords to that of the surrounding heather and gray rocks. The hill² itself is steep on its north side, and midway on the slope is a terrace. On the west and east sides the slope of the hill is gradual, on the south side it is severed by a narrow and shallow ravine from a rocky and heath-covered plateau extending to Spital hill, on which is the burial ground described by Mr. Dixon.³

The Burgh hill camp occupies the summit of the hill. It is roughly oval, lying N.W. and S.E. by N.E. and S.W., and is 348 feet by 168 feet, and contains 1·07 acres. The rampart has been thrown up partly from the inside of the camp and partly from the outside. In places it almost appears to have a ditch both inside and outside.⁴ The rampart on the north side is now very ruinous, and seems never to have been of large size: The natural strength of this side would render much artificial protection unnecessary. From the south-east corner the defences round the south and south-west sides consist of a rampart and ditch, both much altered by time and cultivation. In its highest part the rampart is now nine feet high from the bottom of the ditch. The defences would in all probability be further strengthened by a stockade on the top of the rampart, and the description of a Maori pah, given in the subjoined note, may serve as an illustration of a British camp when completed.⁵

¹ Continued from the *Archaeologia Aeliana*, vol. xiii. p. 233.

² This hill is freestone, not basaltic as described in the *Archaeologia Aeliana*, vol. xiii. p. 227.

³ See p. 24.

⁴ 'Dr. Wilson also (*Prehistoric Annals*, vol. i. p. 324) follows Sir R. C. Hoare in considering the position of the ditch as being a mark distinguishing military from religious works in North America. But Catlin expressly tells us that, in the Mandan village which he describes, the ditch was on the inner side of the embankment, and the warriors were thus sheltered while they shot their arrows through the stockade.'—Lubbock's *Prehistoric Times*, p. 209.

⁵ 'The villages of the New Zealanders are all fortified. They chose the strongest natural situations, and fortified them with palisades about ten feet high. The weaker sides are also defended by a double ditch, the innermost of

There appears to have been an entrance to the camp on the east side, as the ditch ends abruptly there. Another entrance is at the west end, and a third seems to have existed near the centre of the south side.

In the narrow ravine to the south of the camp, there is a rampart, or what seems to be one, raised in the centre of the depression, and with an opening through it opposite to what was probably the south gateway. This mound or rampart extends along the entire south face of the camp, disappearing opposite its west end, but continued for 150 yards east of the camp; here, however, it may be natural, as it is difficult to recognize in this and other hollows to the east of the camp anything artificial. A ditch, however, which runs across the slope of the hill from north to south, and about 100 yards east of the camp, is probably a portion of the defences, and this ditch may have led to Mackenzie estimating the area of Burgh hill camp as seven acres one rood and ten poles.⁶ This ditch cannot be traced in accordance with the lines of the plan given by Mackenzie. He says his sketch is from a 'drawing,' and there can be less hesitation in rejecting his area of the camp, on account of the manifest inaccuracy of the sketch,⁷ and the fact that he claims to point out the 'British' roads in all their ramifications.⁸ It must be admitted, however, that the ditches and mounds to the east of the camp, and on the face of the hill, eighty yards south of it, are very puzzling, and but for their absolute want of connection and continuity might well claim to be artificial; some of them have probably been formed by the traffic to and from the camp,

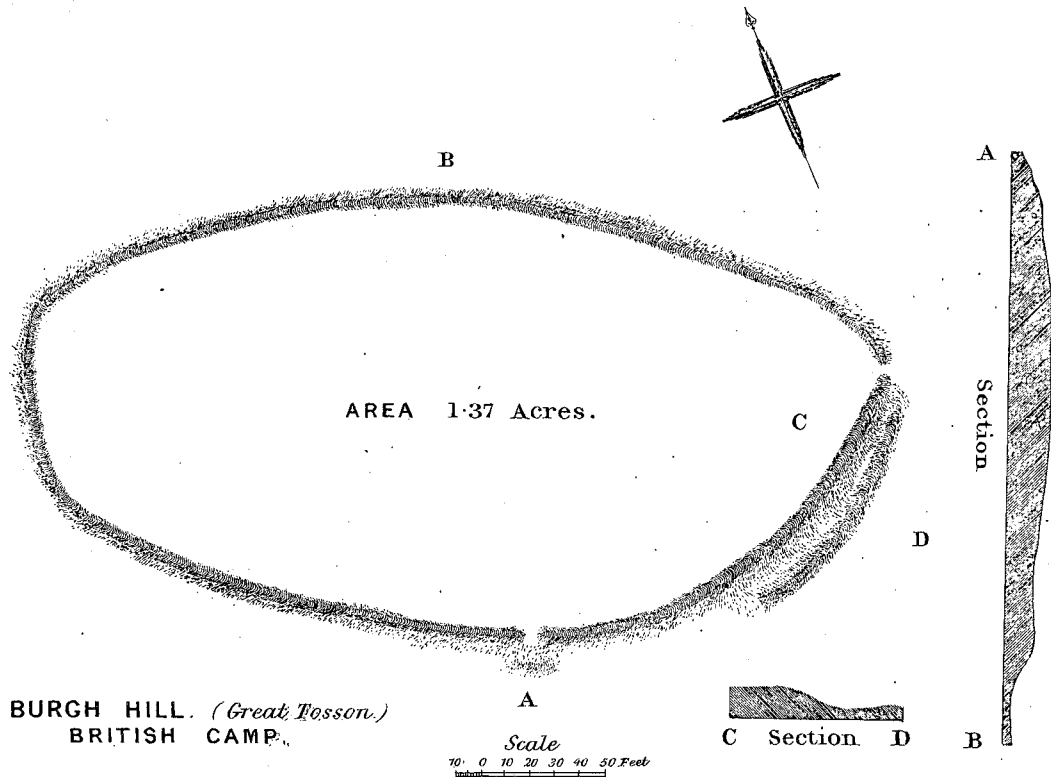
which has a bank and an additional palisade. The stakes are driven obliquely into the ground, so that they project over the ditch, which from the bottom to the top or crown of the bank is four and twenty feet. Close within the innermost palisade is a stage twenty feet high, forty feet long, and six feet broad; it is supported by strong posts, and is intended as a station for those who defend the place, from which they may annoy the assailants by darts and stones, heaps of which lay ready for use. Another stage of the same kind commands the steep avenue from the back, and stands also within the palisade.'—*Captain Cook's First Voyage*, p. 343.

'There is little doubt that most of the encircling walls of the fortified enclosures were surmounted by some sort of stockade, the remains of which have been occasionally noticed.'—'The Mound Builders,' Nadailac's *Pre-historic America*, p. 98.

⁶ *View of Northumberland*, vol. ii. p. 80.

⁷ The plans given in Mackenzie's *View of Northumberland*, vol. ii. pp. 48 and 77, of Harehaugh hill and Hetchester camps, are utterly absurd, and bear not the slightest pretence to accuracy.

⁸ *View of Northumberland*, vol. ii. pp. 21 and 22.



BURGH HILL. (*Great Tossow.*)
BRITISH CAMP.

R.C.H. mens. et del.
1888.

and by the flow of drainage water. The ditch across the slope east of the camp disappears at the base of the hill to the north, and no further trace of it is met with round the north side. A stockade, however, on the edge of the lower terrace at the place would form a good defence, and in connection with the natural steepness of the second descent was possibly considered sufficient for what would correspond to the barmekyn of later times.⁹

I have described Burgh hill camp somewhat minutely, on account of its interest as an early place of defence, and as being very possibly the stronghold of the people whose burial ground, near Spital hill, has been extensively excavated by lord Armstrong, under the superintendence of Mr. Dixon, who has given a description of the burials there. Three hundred yards south-east from Burgh hill camp are two circular spaces surrounded by a mound about two feet high, and respectively twenty-three and seventeen yards in diameter. They are described by Mackenzie as druidical circles,¹⁰ but are almost beyond a doubt the ruins of sheep stells.¹¹

An important discovery of bronze swords with rings for attaching them to a belt was made in 1868, near Tosson, and will be found described in the *Transactions of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club*, vol. viii. p. 176.¹²

Eight British camps and villages may be counted from the ramparts at Burgh hill and within a radius of four miles. They are:—Witches Neuk, Harehaugh hill, Hetchester, Caistron, West hills, Old Rothbury, Lordenshaws, and Garleigh.

It is very remarkable that we should find so many ancient British strongholds grouped together within such a narrow compass, and in such wild and inaccessible situations as do not appear suitable to a

⁹ 'They (the Britons) fortified their towns with a fosse and rampart to secure themselves and their cattle from an enemy,' and when captured, 'magnus numerus pecoris' was found within them.—Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, lib. viii. 17, and v. 9.

¹⁰ *View of Northumberland*, vol. ii. p. 21.

¹¹ 'A watch to be kept at stell ende with two men nightly, of the inhabitants of Mykle Tosson; setters and searchers William Gallin and John Sharperowe.' Order of the night watch of the Borders, 1546.—Nicolson's *Leges Marchiarum*, p. 277.

The stell ende is probably represented by these circular mounds.

¹² For an account of the examination of burials in the district around Tosson, prior to lord Armstrong's investigations, see Greenwell's *British Barrows*, p. 430 *et seq.* • Beads of jet have been found with interments here, and several burials have occurred which undoubtedly belong to post-Roman times.

community certainly possessed of flocks and herds, and almost as certainly practising some system of agriculture, though it may have been a rude one. We have the authority of Caesar and Tacitus for stating that the Britons possessed domestic horses and cattle, and also a particular breed of dogs which was much esteemed, and we have seen the probable provision for the protection of flocks and herds made at Lordenshaws, Old Rothbury, and elsewhere, in a primitive barmekyn formed by the outer rampart. Hand corn-mills or querns are often found in camps and with burials.

This remarkable grouping of camps in such situations and areas, is a feature which requires to be considered by the light of more extended observation than we yet possess. It may form one of the most interesting problems in connection with the present subject.