VIII.—A MEDIÆVAL SITE IN WEARDALE.

By E. J. W. Hildyard and John Charlton.

PART I.

By E. J. W. Hildyard.

It is intended to give here a preliminary account of a small excavation undertaken last year. For reasons that will be explained later the site proved of unexpected importance, and as further digging was obviously desirable it has been thought better to defer a full description of the results until the main deposit has been more completely excavated. Digging has, in fact, been resumed on a larger scale this year, and the number and variety of finds have already been more than doubled.

Last year I had the assistance of my friend and colleague, Major W. V. Wade, F.S.A. My wife, Mrs. B. M. Howard, and Miss Williamson also gave assistance, and part-time labour was provided by two stalwarts of the Home Guard, Mr. J. E. Reed and Mr. J. V. Hogarth. I must also gratefully acknowledge the indulgence of the farmer, Mr. William Bainbridge of Park House, who gave permission to dig and bore with the dilatory methods necessitated by other calls on my time. My grateful thanks are also due to Mr. William Bulmer, for cleaning the small objects and drawing them and the pottery, and who helped in other ways; and finally to Mr. J. Charlton, without whose assistance I would not have attempted to write on a period outside my usual range.

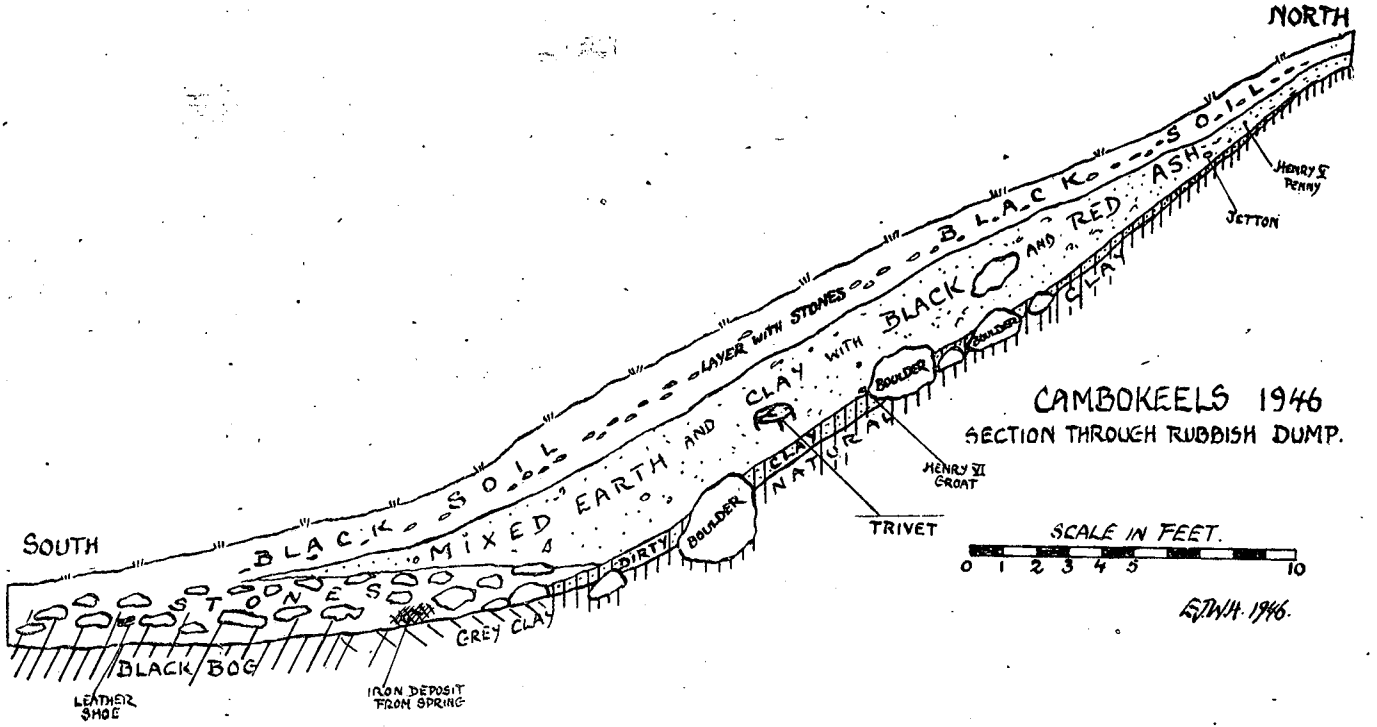

NORTH
SOUTH
BLACK SOIL
LAYER WITH STONES
BLACK SOIL
MIXED EARTH AND CLAY WITH BLACK AND RED ASH
BOULDER
BOULDER
CLAY
HENRY V PENNY
JETTON
HENRY VI GROAT
TRIVET
CLAY
NATURAL
BOULDER
DIRTY
STONES
GREY CLAY
BLACK BOG
LEATHER SHOE
IRON DEPOSIT FROM SPRING
CAMBOKEELS 1946
SECTION THROUGH RUBBISH DUMP.
SCALE IN FEET.
0 1 2 3 4 5 10
E.D.W.H. 1946.

FIG. I.

THE SITE.

When I came to live in Weardale, twelve years ago, I began to look round for sites that might repay investigation, and one of the first to catch my attention was the "camp" marked on the six-inch Ordnance Survey[1] near Cambokeels mine, midway between Eastgate and Westgate. The site is a small plateau, just above the 800 ft. contour, between the main road and the river, on which side the ground falls sharply away into a bog. In 1936 I visited the site with my friend Col. O. P. Serocold, C.M.G., F.S.A. He noticed that the soil from rabbit scrapes on one part of the steep bank was unusually dark, and this, combined with the position of the bank, suggested the presence of a rubbish dump from the "camp" above. One afternoon we dug two trial holes near the bottom of the slope and found quite a quantity of mediæval green-glazed pottery. Afterwards Col. Serocold suggested that this might be the site of Edward III's camp in 1327 when his unsuccessful attempt to cut off a large marauding expedition of Scots led by the Earl of Murray and Sir James Douglas resulted in the Treaty of Northampton, when the independence of Scotland was recognized and Robert Bruce acknowledged as its lawful king.[2]

It is assumed that the Scottish camp was somewhere on the Billing hills south of the river, but the current assumption[3] that Edward's camp on the north side was on the ledge above Old Park House, where there are still earthworks to be seen, is open to more question. Describing Edward's camp Hutchinson[4] says: "On Stanhope Park is the vestige of a regular camp in a strong situation at a place now called Parkhouse Pasture about two[5] miles above Stanhope; the

[1] Edition of 1923. Durham Sheet XXIII S.E.
[2] This expedition has been described in detail by Froissart, Leland, Holmshead, Hutchinson, Scott and others.
[3] By J. J. Graham in *Weardale Past and Present*, and others locally.
[4] Hutchinson's *History of Durham* (1794), vol. III, p. 285.
[5] Stanhope is nearly five miles to the east.

south side or intrenchment is about seventy paces in length on the brink of a very steep slope towards the river at the foot of which is a morass grown here and there with a few straggling alders[6] and extending itself the whole width of the camp to the river's brink from which the camp is distant 70 yards;[7] the slope of the hill turns almost at right angles round the south-west corner of the plain and forms the west side of the ground about 40 paces in length, but terminates in a horizontal plane before it reaches the north-west corner of the camp. The north side of the intrenchment is about 70 paces in length. There is little appearance remaining of a ditch and the mound is very low, but at the distance of about 60 paces in front is another morass[8] which extends itself to the front of those steep hills which inclose the dale. The east side of the intrenchment is 60 paces in length and guarded with a very deep ditch.[9] In the south-east and south-west corners appear the foundations of some kind of buildings but probably they were more modern." This is a very accurate description of what Cambokeels camp must have appeared like before the addition of modern features. Of its name William Morley Egglestone[10] says, "A mile and a half west of Eastgate we have the interesting CAMMOCK EALE, locally known as Cammo Keel, for the derivation of which we have the adjectival component from the Celtic *cam*, crooked, and the ending *og*, diminutive, Celtic *ock*, hence the little crooked isle." Originally the site, nearly surrounded by bog or river, could fairly have been called almost an island.

THE EXCAVATION.

Last year I decided to see if further digging of the rub-

[6] There is still a grove of alders in the bog.
[7] The old park site is some 500 yards from the river.
[8] Mr. W. Morley of Eastgate informs me that when the main road was made foundations here had to be dug down through many feet of peat. The fields on the north of the road are still boggy.
[9] Probably destroyed by the cutting of the Heights Quarry incline.
[10] *Weardale Names of Field and Fell*, 1886, p. 77.

bish dump would confirm the suggested identification of the site. It was, however, very soon obvious that it had had a longer occupation than Edward's brief sojourn, and while nothing has been found to support the theory, all the finds being a century or more later, there is nothing to exclude this earlier visit. Tactically it is a likely place, with a good spring of water nearby, and it is quite likely that the six days spent by the royal army have left no recoverable traces.

The rubbish dump was selected for excavation because it was thought that only here would dateable material be found owing to the temporary nature of the occupation. A double trench 10 ft. wide was driven through the centre of the deposit, which appeared to be roughly triangular in shape. The general appearance of the deposit is shown in the section (fig. 1), but as might be expected in a rubbish tip there was no real stratification. For this reason it was not thought necessary to remove the soil in layers as the steep slope would have made this very much more laborious than cutting a series of flat sections. At the same time note was taken of the levels at which pottery and objects were found, but there was nothing to differentiate the strata; the same types of pottery and objects were found at all levels and from top to bottom of the heap. The small objects were most numerous in the upper part of the mound and at a depth of just over one foot, but they occurred at all levels down to undisturbed. The heavy pieces of pottery, handles and bases tended to appear in the bog at the bottom whither they had rolled down the slope, but they were also found at other places. The suggestion that the deposit is a homogeneous one covering a comparatively short period of time is confirmed by the evidence of the objects themselves, and especially by the location of the most important finds, which were two coins.

One of these, a Henry V penny,[11] was found near the top of the bank not many inches from the surface. The

[11] Archbishop Bowet of York (Brooke, Class G) *c.* 1420-22.

other, a Henry VI groat[12] was found almost on the undisturbed clay beneath 4 ft. of rubbish in the middle of the slope. At its deepest the deposit was over 5 ft. thick and the trench was some 40 ft. long. It was not possible to go very deep into the bog because of the water level during a wet summer.

About 1,200 cubic feet of soil were examined, but even so the number and variety of finds were remarkable. Apart from the great quantity of pottery there was a wide range of other types of object including a jetton or counter,[13] part of a bronze cauldron with iron chain for suspension, a tripod, a bronze tube, a lead or silver finger ring and several horseshoes and spurs.

These tell the story of a wealthy people who could afford to lose silver coins[14] on a rubbish heap, owned horses and expensive equipment and were educated enough to use jettons. There is no record of any manor or great house at this spot and no local tradition connected with the place. In fact this remote part of Weardale is known to have been practically uninhabited at this period. It seems therefore that the presence of this rich hoard of objects can be accounted for only by connecting it with the bishop of Durham's hunting activities. Mr. Charlton points out that the site itself corresponds to what is known of mediæval hunting lodges, and it is, of course, well known that one of the bishop's deer parks[15] was situated in this part of Weardale, a fact still commemorated in the names of the villages at each end of the park, Eastgate and Westgate. There was a castle at Westgate which might provide amenities for the visiting bishop, but Cambokeels would have been more convenient as it is situated near the middle of the park and accords with the documentary evidence set

[12] A Calais groat of the Two Annulet Coinage 1422-27.

[13] For calculations at a time when Roman numerals still had to be used.

[14] A groat at this time was the price of a fat sheep.

[15] Large sections of the wall on the south side of the river pass through my land and can still be recognized by their unusual thickness and absence of coping.

out in part II of this paper. Gate Castle, thought to be the central gate, remains of which still stand, is less than half a mile away on the opposite bank. According to Graham,[16] in the sixteenth century there was plenty of hunting in Weardale forest and there were 200 deer in the upper park. The sport seems, however, to have declined towards the end of the century and the area was disafforested by 1511.[17] As will be seen later there seems at present to be a slight conflict in the dating evidence, a few pieces of imported Siegburg pottery and the jetton[18] being considerably later than the coins and other objects as a whole. But this may be resolved this year. At any rate the hunting-lodge hypothesis seems the only one to account for the finds, but it remains for the spade to prove this by work on the plateau itself.

Perhaps the greatest importance of this site to mediæval archæology generally is as a type site for pottery and objects, of many of which there are no dated examples.

PART II.

By John Charlton.

THE BISHOP'S FOREST OF WEARDALE.

Although the royal forests have been carefully studied in their legal and social aspects, less work has been done on their extent and day-to-day organization; and comparatively little is known of the structures[1] and earthworks[2] which were essential to them. Still less is known of the hunting-

[16] loc. cit., p. 39.
[17] See *post*, p. 189, n. 8.
[18] Dated by Mr. J. Allan of the British Museum to the early sixteenth century.
[1] Except in the case of some of the royal hunting-lodges, which later grew to importance as royal palaces.
[2] Sections of the boundary-dikes which generally enclosed deer-forests have occasionally been recorded: e.g. in Lancashire (Rawstorne, *Gamonia* (1905 edn.), p. 36).

grounds of the bishops of Durham : there are, in fact, very few references to them in the studies of mediæval forests, as if the authors fought shy of the peculiarities of the Palatinate. It is not proposed, in this brief note, to attempt to remedy this deficiency, but rather, with the Cambokeels site as the occasion, to point to a possible line for local research and to suggest that the study of this site may have an important bearing on a not insignificant part of the history of Durham.

In forest organization and laws the Palatinate seems in general to have followed the Crown, as in other spheres. Thus the obligations of those living or holding land in or near the bishop's forest of Weardale were not very different from those of their counterparts in say the New Forest district. The bishop, too, like the king, might make grants of forest rights, but these, like those made by the king, were usually very carefully defined, so that generosity did not interfere with self-interest. For example, though the priors of Durham were early granted rights of imparking at Muggleswick, they were not allowed the full rights of the chase. Perhaps the small size of the Palatinate accounted in this case for the bishop's parsimony.

The great hunting forest of the bishop, the scene of the annual great hunt, or *caza magna*, was in Weardale.[3] Its origin, if it had a formal origin, is obscure, like that of some of the royal forests, which seem to date from Saxon times. Its customs are first defined in *Boldon Book*,[4] which shows that an elaborate organization was in existence as early as the end of the twelfth century. The two following examples from this source[5] show the scope and detail of these regulations, besides throwing much light on the main subject of this paper : the site of Cambokeels.

[3] There were apparently two parks, in the western of which Edward III encamped in 1327. One was surrounded by a stone wall by bishop Neville, and it will be interesting to see whether it was provided with the deer-leaps familiar elsewhere.

[4] Surtees Soc., vol. 25, *passim*.

[5] loc. cit., pp. 24, 29.

All the villans of Auklandshire, to wit, of North Aukland and West Aukland, and Escomb and Newton, find at the great hunts of the bishop for each oxgang a rope, and make the bishop's hall in the forest, of the length of 60 feet and of the breadth within the posts of 16 feet, with a buttery and hatch and a chamber and privy, also they make a chapel 40 feet long and 15 feet wide and they have of charity 2s. and they also make their part of the fence round the lodges and have on the bishop's departure a whole ton of beer or half a ton if it remain.

Moreover, all the villans [of Stanhope] make at the great hunts a kitchen and a larder and a kennel, and they find a settle in the hall, and in the chamber, and carry all the bishop's corrody from Wolsingham to the lodges [and carry venison to Durham and Aukland].

The obligations of the different localities naturally varied roughly with their proximity to the great forest; but even comparatively remote parishes might be required to contribute, say hounds, to the great hunt.[6] The purpose of the ropes is not certain, but it is probable that they were used as some sort of buckstall[7] or trap—for making, in fact, a kind of corral, into which the deer could be driven and so more easily killed, either for the pot or by some inactive bishop or his guests, unwilling to face all the rigours of the chase. This practice was common in the Middle Ages, when hunting seems to have been less "sporting" than in later times.

The general provisions of *Boldon Book* are echoed, towards the end of the fourteenth century, in *Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, and it is possible that they remained in force, with minor changes, until Weardale was disafforested about a hundred years later.[8] The care and maintenance

[6] e.g. Great Usworth was required to feed a horse and a hound and to bring two greyhounds and five ropes to the great hunt.

[7] This practice existed at royal forests. On occasion, in late mediæval or Tudor times, a kind of grandstand seems to have been erected near the probable site of the kill. Such a structure is illustrated on an early estate map in the Clarendon (Wilts) estate office.

[8] This was probably after the lease of the forest to Richard duke of Gloucester in 1479. (V.C.H. II, 386.)

of the forest fell upon the forest officers,[9] to which there are numerous documentary references. They seem to have resembled their counterparts of the royal forests in standing, general organization, character and misdemeanours.[10]

From this bare outline we can proceed to some kind of general picture. The main hunting event of the year was the great autumn hunt,[11] for which the inhabitants of the neighbouring parishes had to perform certain important services. The episcopal hunting-party lived in buildings apparently of a temporary character, erected by the local inhabitants, but suggesting some degree of state.[12] The main elements, indeed, of the mediæval manor-house were present: there was a hall with a great chamber at one end and buttery, pantry and kitchen at the other, and there was a tolerably commodious chapel. Beyond the principal apartments were stables, kennels and, presumably, provision for storage. A fence or perhaps a stone wall surrounded the whole group.

In the present context, an important point emerging from the accounts in *Boldon Book* and *Hatfield's Survey* is the temporary character of the buildings as described. It is hard to believe, however, that they were mere booths rebuilt every year—indeed, if Cambokeels is to be taken as an example, the quantity of pottery it has so far produced is against such a view—and it seems more likely that the same structures were re-used, for a period at least. On the other hand, their light construction would give them a limited life, so it is, perhaps, best to assume on the present rather scanty evidence that these hunting-lodges were after a time rebuilt or abandoned according to circumstances: the condition of the building, the run of the hunting, or the preference of the bishop or his forest officers. In any case,

[9] There is a fine late thirteenth-century grave-slab to a chief forester in the crypt of Durham Cathedral.

[10] e.g. extortion (1302); defalcation (1343).

[11] The chief quarry was apparently the red deer, but the roe deer was also hunted (the "rahunt"); the wolf was probably another quarry and wild boar was found in Durham county down to the time of Elizabeth.

[12] It was from such beginnings that some of the royal palaces grew.

it seems we must assume that there are in Weardale several sites at least of this kind, Cambokeels, it is suggested, being one. To prove this will involve much field-work. At present all that can be put forward is that some of the "unclassified" earthworks in the valley may be relics of the bishop's great hunt.

The whole question must eventually be decided by the spade. Without further digging, indeed, the nature of Cambokeels itself is not certain, for hitherto Mr. Hildyard's work has been limited to the kitchen rubbish-pit. The surface indications, however, suggest a site such as described above; so do the finds and the general situation. In short the only explanation that seems to fit the facts as known is that Cambokeels was the Melton of Weardale some time in the fifteenth century.

THE CAMBOKEELS FINDS.

So far the finds point to an occupation about the middle or the second half of the fifteenth century. Granted that the site is that of a hunting-lodge, it can historically be associated with any or all of three periods. These are: occupation by the bishop, or his representatives *c.* 1430-1476;[13] occupation under the lease to Richard duke of Gloucester (granted 1479); occupation after the death of Richard, but before 1511, by which time disafforestation is known to have been effective.

THE POTTERY.

It is now a commonplace that mediæval pottery has marked regional characteristics. In the north, for example, the pottery of Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland and north Westmorland and the North Riding of Yorkshire forms a fairly consistent regional group. The Cambokeels sherds fit very well into this northern pattern and, indeed, the site promises to yield some text-book examples of the local types. It is not desirable at this early stage to attempt a full publication of all the types found, for there is every prospect that further excavation will produce both a wider

[13] The forest had ceased to be used as a hunting-forest on the appointment of William Dudley to the see 1476, but was leased to Richard duke of Gloucester three years later (V.C.H. II, 386).

range of types and more complete specimens. One type, however, does seem to call for illustration now, for it is found abundantly not only at Cambokeels but at many northern sites: this is the large three-handled pitcher, of which several examples are shown on fig. 2.

A word should first be said about a pitcher-series with which the Cambokeels examples are closely associated and from which they

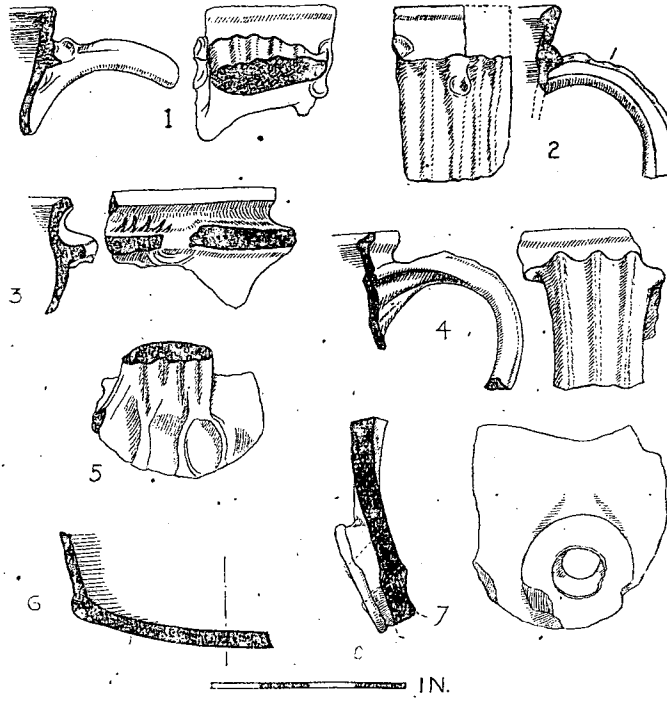


FIG. 2.

may descend. Late thirteenth and fourteenth-century sites in our region produce numbers of large pitchers, some 14 to 18 inches high, usually of smooth grey ware, with rounded base and barred or "bridge" spout. This type, though it has not been closely dated, can be compared, as to its spout and rim at least, with pitchers of the same period in the south. The fifteenth-century vessels at Cambokeels display in ware, glaze and base a strong similarity to the earlier series, but their size is rather greater and their form

shows two important differences: there is no spout and there is a bung-hole near the base to replace it.

DESCRIPTION:

All the sherds shown in fig. 2 are of smooth grey ware and have a green or brownish-green glaze of good quality on the outside.

Nos. 1-5 are necks and handles. The rim-sections show that the lip is usually sharply inclined inwards—occasionally, as in the case of no. 1, almost folded. The handles are grooved and have the usual leaf-like markings where they join the neck and body. In one case (no. 3) the neck is decorated with stitch-like markings, occasionally found on northern pitchers.[14]

No. 6 is a typical base. It is rather clumsily rounded and is very thick, presumably because of the weight of the vessel. The slight moulding where the base joins the wall of the pot is common but not invariable: often the angle is plain.

No. 7 is one of a number of bung-holes. The outlet is always set an inch or two above the base, presumably to keep back lees or sediment.[15]

The other vessels are generally homogeneous in character (there are no bridge-spout pitchers, for example) and include some examples of types not often found in the north, such as mammiform costrels. There is, however, one exception. Among the sherds—and not, Mr. Hildyard assures me, merely strays—were some fragments of a frilled base of Siegburg stoneware. Its section would readily allow a fifteenth-century dating, but its well-potted body and good clear glaze suggest the following century. It is to be hoped that further digging may provide a reason for this apparent discrepancy: at the moment, unless we modify what is known of the dating of Siegburg ware in this country, we can only say that the date of these sherds is against the run of the coins, pottery and small objects.

OTHER FINDS.

Small finds are generally in keeping with the suggested date and purpose of the site. A selection of the metal objects is illustrated in fig. 3. Only brief notes will be given here.

Horseshoes: these are of the normal late mediæval type. They lack, however, the usual but not invariable calkins and have a marked raising of the fore-edge. (Fig. 3, nos. 1 and 2.)

[14] e.g. on a jug-neck (with bridge-spout) figured in P.S.A.N., 4th ser., v, pp. 231-2.

[15] The bung-hole type seems to come into prominence in the south about the same time as in the north; cp. the large jars from the Cheam pottery-kilns (Surrey Arch. Coll., xxxv, p. 93). The bridge spout may have been intended to keep back scum.

Spurs: these are of the late "rowel" type, and have the long shanks characteristic of fifteenth-century examples.[16] They are iron. (Nos. 4-7.)

The buckles, of like material, while not closely datable, are of a sort common in the later middle ages. The chain and nail are also of iron and are square in section. (Nos. 3, 8, 10, 11.)

Two unusual objects call for especial notice. The first is an

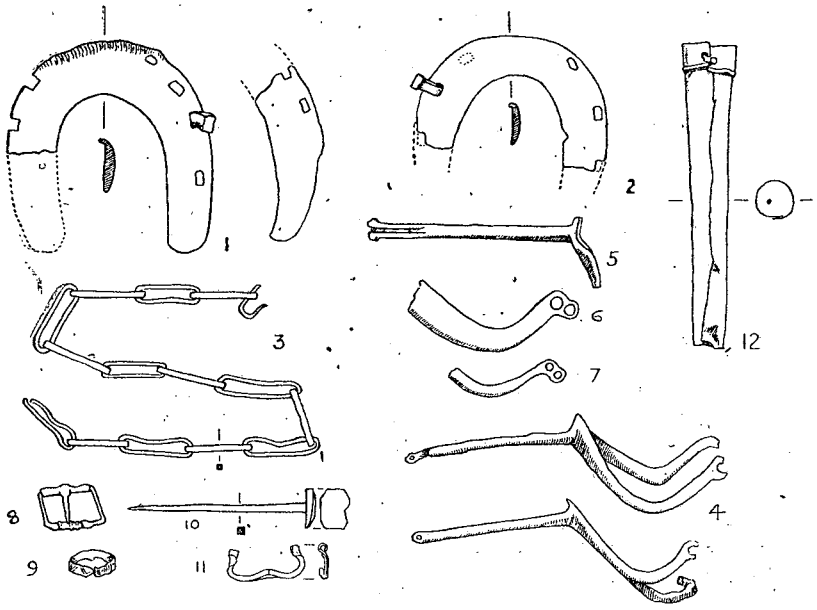


FIG. 3.

iron tripod or brandreth, for the drawing of which we are indebted to Mr. J. Seymour Lindsay. This rare find, illustrated on plate VII, retains only one leg, and that is a later repair. A feature of the object is the interesting though simple attempt at decoration by the use of incised lines both along the edges and where the legs join the ring. Brandreths of this date are exceptionally rare, probably, as Mr. Lindsay suggests, because the iron of which they were made was normally re-used.

[16] London Museum Catalogue, fig. 33.

The other object is a bronze tube with the remains of a circular, detachable cap. It may have been some kind of container, and it has been suggested, though with little comparative evidence, that it was a penner. (Fig. 3, no. 12.)

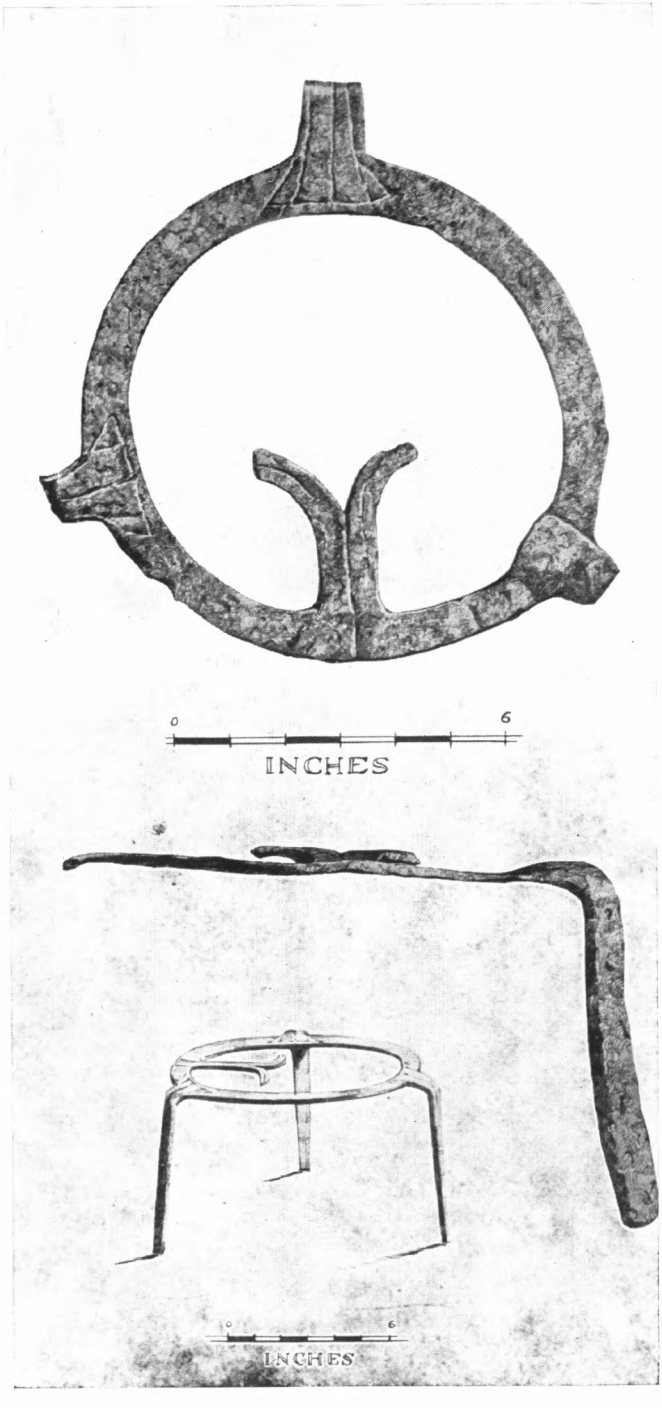
There remain two groups of objects whose purpose and abundance cannot, at this stage, be readily explained. About fifteen hones were found. These vary a good deal in size and are made, Mr. Hildyard tells me, of local stone; their texture is relatively soft. A selection of them will be published in due course.[17] The other group consists of some 50 small stone discs (one only is made from a pitcher sherd). They vary in diameter (from 1 in. to 5 in.) and in thickness (from ½ in. to 1½ in.). Their edges have been roughly chipped into shape; none is perforated. It seems unlikely that these objects were stoppers, and their irregularity of size is rather against their being used in a game. It is just possible that they were used in dressing skins.

CONCLUSIONS.

A few final words seem desirable to summarize the evidence and to stress the importance of the site. That it represents the remains of one of the bishop's hunting-lodges is a probable, if not a certain, conclusion. Its situation is suitable: it is convenient geographically, and it occupies a space of about the right size (and on the edge of a river-bank convenient for drainage) for such a group of buildings as is described in the records. Its position has no obvious military significance, and local conditions and such historical information as has so far been collected do not appear to favour its identification with a mediæval manor-house. Lastly, the nature of the finds requires some special explanation. The pottery, in relation to the very small area excavated, is most abundant, even for a kitchen deposit: in quantity and quality it is at least the equal of that found at any northern site. Again, the nature, quantity and quality of the other objects suggest that this remote spot

[17] One obvious use is, of course, the sharpening of weapons, including doubtless the butchers' cleavers; another use might be for sharpening axes when building or repairs were done.

witnessed an occupation of a special character. But whatever further excavations may show, one thing can be stressed: the coin and pottery finds promise to provide at Cambokeels a type-site for northern mediæval pottery and small finds.



TRIPOD OR BRANDRETH.