

XIII.—FURTHER EXCAVATIONS AT INGRAM HILL.

By A. H. A. HOGG.

The small enclosure at Ingram Hill¹ was the site of some trial excavations by the writer in 1939. In the report on the work,² the hope was expressed that a further more extensive examination would some time become possible. In 1948 this hope was partly fulfilled, but unfortunately no labour could be hired and very little voluntary help was available. In spite of this, some additional information was obtained as to the nature of the site, and some mistaken deductions made in the first report have been corrected. Thanks are due to Mr. Gibb, the owner of the site, for permission to excavate; to the Ancient Monuments Branch of the Ministry of Works for allowing the disturbance of a scheduled monument; and to Miss S. A. Peacock and Miss D. Todd for valuable help with the actual digging.

The Site. The surface appearance and the position of the site have been described in detail in the earlier report. Briefly, it is a circular enclosure about 160 ft. in diameter, containing the remains of small rectangular houses. It stands at about 550 ft. above Ordnance Datum, on a low spur pointing eastward.

The Excavations. For the sake of economy, the general plan (fig. 1) has been reproduced from the block used for the previous report, and the work done in 1948 is therefore not shown. But the plan of the earlier remains (fig. 2) gives the

¹ No. 27SW11, *New List of Native Sites*. *Proc. S.A. Newcastle*, 4 ser. XI, p. 162. The site is 1,100 yards W.S.W. from Ingram Church. N.G.R. 010157.

² *Arch. Ael.* 4 ser. XX (1942), pp. 110-121.

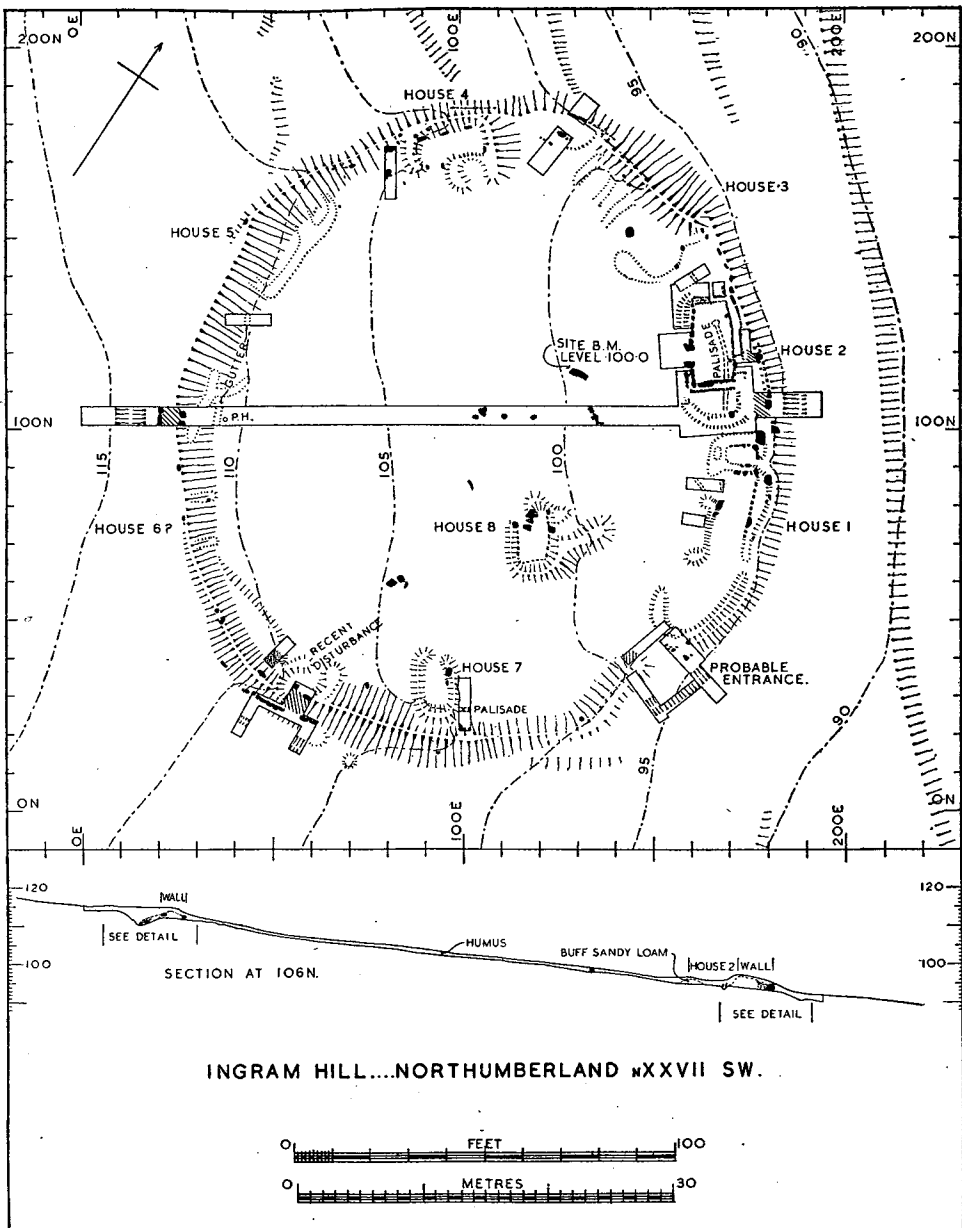


FIG. I.

position of all trenches cut to rock, and the detailed plans are related to the same system of co-ordinates as the general plan.

The principal area examined lay between houses 2 and 3,

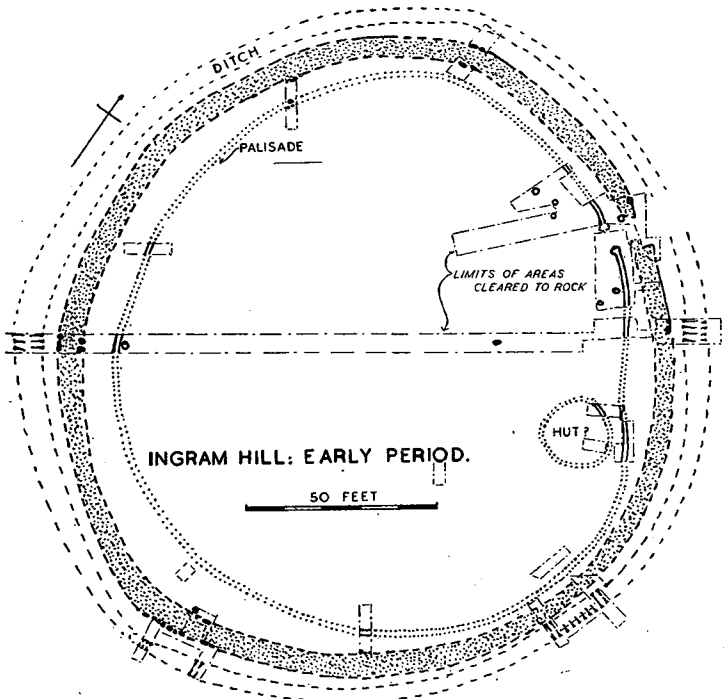


FIG. 2.

and the main room of house 8 was also cleared. The results showed that the conclusion reached in 1939, that there were two main periods of occupation, was correct, but that the stone wall and ditch belonged to the earlier. As this is likely to be the final report on the site so far as the writer is concerned, it seems preferable to give a description of each period of occupation separately, mentioning the results of the 1948 work where relevant, rather than to devote a

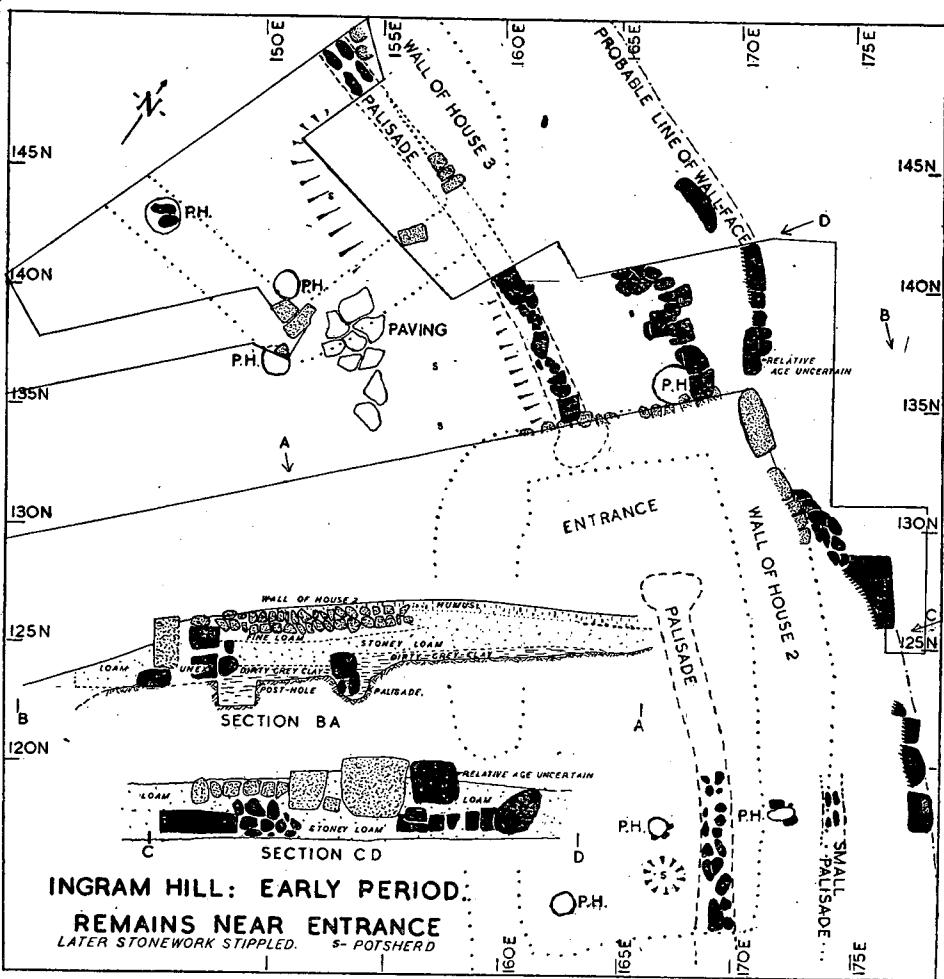


FIG. 3.

separate section to a detailed account of the 1948 excavation.

The Earlier Occupation. Further confirmation of the existence of some occupation before the construction of the palisaded enclosure was provided by the discovery of a lump of iron slag used as packing in the palisade trench,³ but nothing was added to the meagre structural evidence uncovered in 1939.⁴

The first substantial construction on the site was the enclosure wall, accompanied by a slight external ditch. This was wrongly attributed in 1939 to the same period as the houses, but the section cut at the N. end of house 2 makes it certain that it is earlier. The wall was about 7 ft. thick, faced on both sides with large stones and filled with rubble, clay, or sandy loam. The inner face is rough, but the outer is well built, partly of laid and partly of orthostatic masonry. It can never have been of great height. The ditch was about 5 ft. wide and 2-3 ft. deep of blunt V section, but varied greatly in size.

Accompanying the wall, at a distance varying from 3 to 10 ft. from the inner face, was a palisade. This cannot have been very substantial, as the trench in which it was set was only about a foot deep and wide. It had a packing of large stones. The entrance through the palisade corresponded with that through the wall, so they were probably in use at the same time, but there is nothing to show whether they were part of the same original design or whether some time elapsed between their construction. It seems probable, however, that they are actually contemporary, as the palisade was very slight and the wall alone would not have served to keep stock within the enclosure.

It seemed desirable to leave the walls of the later house undisturbed, and this prevented the complete clearance of the entrance, but its arrangement is clear (fig. 3). A short

³ Identified as slag by Mr. Allen of the Department of Geology, University of Cambridge.

⁴ *loc. cit.* pp. 118-19.

straight passage about 7 ft. wide led through the wall and palisade. A post-hole about 1 ft. in diameter and depth, probably one of a pair, lay immediately inside the line of the wall, and the end of the palisade on the S. side of the gap was enlarged to take a substantial post. On the N. side, the end lay under the later wall. Superficially, the enclosure wall seemed to be continuous across the gap, but clearance of the face showed (fig. 3, section CD) that the stones crossing the entrance rested on a layer of soil about a foot thick, whereas those on either side were almost in contact with the rock.

On both sides of the palisade a layer of greasy grey clay containing scraps of charcoal and pottery covered the rock (section BA). Outside the palisade the layer was 2 or 3 in. thick. Inside, the thickness was about 6 in., but there was no visible division between an upper and lower layer. Fragments of a large pot, described below, were found in the upper part of this clay in 1948. Post-holes set in no recognizable plan occur at distances varying from 6 to 10 ft. from the palisade, and a small area of slab paving was also found. No sign of occupation was discovered in the centre of the enclosure.

It seems, therefore, that the inhabitants lived in very roughly built lean-to huts set against the palisade, the centre of the area being kept clear for their cattle. There may also have been palisaded huts, as a short length of slight palisade trench which could have belonged to such a hut was found in 1939.

The Pot (fig. 4). About a third of the vessel was found. The ware is extremely coarse, with very large grits, and the pot has been built up in coil technique. The section is unusual, but is exactly similar to one found by Mrs. C. M. Piggott at Hownam Rings,⁵ associated with Roman pottery of about A.D. 250-300. The Ingram Hill pot, however, is coarser.

Unfortunately, this evidence does not justify assigning a

⁵ *Proc. S.A. Scot.* 1947-8, Fig. 10 and p. 215.

precise date to the Ingram pot. The pottery at Hownam Rings showed practically no change in character during the long history of the site, and the unusual shape of the pot is probably functional—perhaps to prevent splashing by milk or some other liquid.

The Date of the Earlier Occupation. The early enclosure is clearly an example of the palisaded enclosures recently

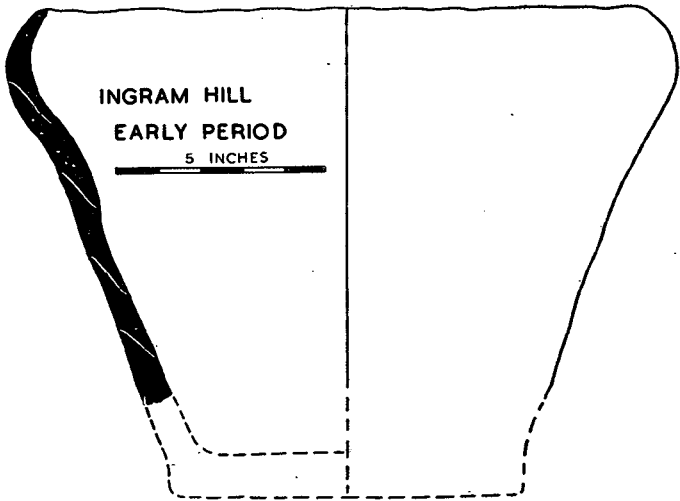


FIG. 4.

studied by Dr. Steer⁶ and Mrs. Piggott,⁷ and assigned to the first century B.C. The wall and palisade at Ingram Hill is very similar to the second period at Hayhope Knowe, but the latter site did not have lean-to huts against the palisade. However, in spite of minor differences there can be practically no doubt that the earlier occupation at Ingram Hill belongs to the same period.

The Interval before the Later Occupation. The section at the N. end of House 2 (fig. 3, section BA) showed that the

⁶ *Proc. S.A. Scot.* 1948-9, pp. 64-7.

⁷ Hayhope Knowe, *Proc. S.A. Scot.* 1948-9, pp. 45-63.

early occupation layer was covered by about a foot of clean stony loam. The occupation layer itself died out at 10 or 12 ft. from the palisade and the stony loam then rested in clean rock. Under the end wall of House 2 was a layer 4 in. thick of fine clean sandy loam, free from stones, but elsewhere the stony loam merged gradually into the modern turf.

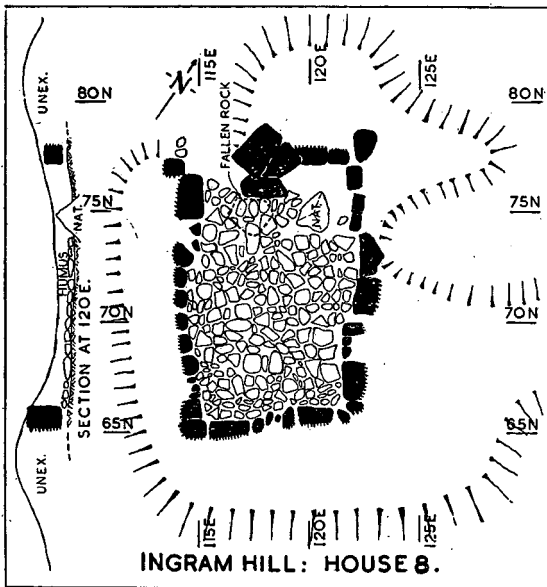


FIG. 5.

It seems, therefore, that the enclosure was cultivated for some time and then left undisturbed and grass-grown for a further interval before the later houses were built.

The Later Occupation. After this period of disuse the site was occupied by a small settlement of 7 or 8 rectangular houses. One (No. 8) was built near the centre of the enclosure, the others round its edge. House 2 was cleared during 1939. It contained an oval setting of stones as if for

a hearth and two post-holes against the E. wall, suggesting a penthouse roof. The floor was mostly of earth, and showed no trace of occupation.

In 1948 the main room of House 8 was cleared (fig. 5). This was paved with large cobbles and showed no sign of hearth or post-holes. It also was completely free from charcoal or any other trace of occupation. Those parts of Houses 1 and 3 which were examined showed a similar lack of occupation material.

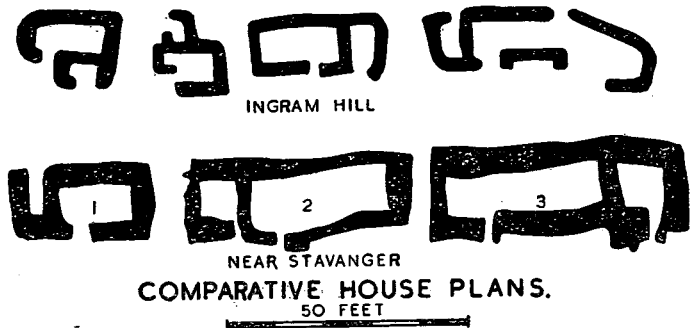


FIG. 6.

It is, therefore, certain that the occupation of the settlement was very short, and any evidence for date must come from the house plans.

The Date of the Later Occupation. The majority of the houses consist of two rooms; one large, nearly rectangular, but with the long walls bowed slightly outwards; the other small, with slighter walls and a separate external entrance.

In spite of the apparently simple plan, an extensive search has failed to discover any similar among the published rectangular house sites in Britain. The long house at Gunnar Peak, which seems to be of rather similar type, is in fact almost certainly composed of two separate buildings, the walls which appear to connect the rectangular and round rooms being merely fallen stones.

Some houses of similar plan, however, have been published from near Stavanger⁸ (fig. 6). These show the same slightly curved walls, the small room with the separate entrance, and even the small projections beside the entrance which occur in House 1 at Ingram. They date from the sixth to the eighth century A.D.

These houses are found in that part of Norway which lies nearest to the coast of Northumberland, and there is nothing inherently improbable in the idea that a small group of Norse invaders should have attempted to settle at Ingram, without permanent success. But the simple long hut is one of the most neglected of British field antiquities, and until many more have been properly examined and published it cannot be claimed that the evidence of the plans alone provides conclusive proof of the date and derivation of the Ingram Hill houses.

The "Grave". East of the enclosure, just outside the plan, is a setting of stones which superficially resembles a grave. It is roughly rectangular, 8 ft. by 3 ft., formed of large boulders rising about a foot above the turf. Its axis runs from 226E., 112½N. to 234E., 113½N. The S.E. half was removed, and the longitudinal section showed that the stones rested a few inches below the turf, with a foot of stony humus between them and the undisturbed rock. The only sign of disturbance was a rounded hollow, possibly natural, near its S.W. end. This was about a foot deep and 2 ft. 6 in. in diameter, filled with stony humus.

The structure was, therefore, not a grave, and its purpose and date remain unknown, though it is probably later than the cultivation terraces.

ADDENDUM.

Since describing the pot from the early period at Ingram Hill, the writer has observed that the remarkable Danish site

⁸Jan Peterson, *Gamle gårdanslegg i Rogaland, Inst. for Sammenlignende Kulturforskning*, vols. 23 and 31. Figs. 1 and 3 from Hanaland, vol. 31, p. 81; 2 from Hønnland, vol. 23, p. 19.

of Trelleborg has produced a large vessel which appears from the illustrations to be almost identical. (Poul Nørlund, *Trelleborg; Nordiske Fortidsminder* IV, i, 1948, fig. 108e, pl. X, 2.) The date of Trelleborg is *ca.* A.D. 1000.

It seems desirable to record this parallel, as the possibility of a connection needs to be kept in mind when further work is done on non-Roman sites in Northumberland; but in the writer's opinion it does not justify assigning the earlier remains at Ingram Hill to such a late date, in view of the other evidence for the age of such constructions in this area.

In addition, much of the Trelleborg pottery closely resembles that from Traprain Law, which is securely dated to the Roman period. It would seem, therefore, that, as several writers have recently suggested, this crude ware cannot be used to compare the age of widely separated sites, although in a restricted area it may be useful dating evidence.