

Photo. N. McCord.

THE FAWNS.

King's College, Newcastle.

IV.—FURTHER NOTES ON RECTILINEAR
EARTHWORKS IN NORTHUMBERLAND:
SOME MEDIEVAL AND LATER
SETTLEMENTS.

BY GEORGE JOBEY.

In the previous volume of *Archæologia Aeliana* an attempt was made to isolate the types and define the distribution of rectangular enclosed settlements of the Roman period in Northumberland. Brief reference was made to the fact that some sites appeared to have been included in previous inventories in contexts which, directly or indirectly, attributed to them an undeserved antiquity. It is not the intention of the current survey of earthworks in the county to be concerned in detail with medieval and later remains, except in the process of elimination. The following notes are submitted merely as an indication of the range of some smaller sites of this order which, less conspicuous than the bailey motte and less extensive than some of the known medieval villages, have been referred to variously in the past as "fort", "camp", or "native site".

Homestead Moats.

The homestead moat or moated manor and grange is a common type of medieval field monument further south.¹ More recently homestead moats have received recognition in the Border counties of Roxburgh² and Dumfries,³ but

¹ e.g. Allcroft, *Earthworks of England*, ch. XIV.

² R.C.A.M., *Roxburgh*, vol. 1, p. 47, for summary.

³ R. W. Feacham in *Trans. Dumfries and Galloway N.H. and A. Soc.*, ser. 3, vol. XXXIII, p. 64.

little attention has been given to them, in their own right, in the county of Northumberland.⁴

Generally speaking it seems likely that the majority of the more southerly sites were made between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. The ditch, whether wet or dry, served for the drainage of the interior as well as defence, and normally, though not always, enclosed a rectangular shaped area on which the dwellings and farm buildings were situated. These buildings usually seem to have been made of wood or wattle and daub in the early period.⁵ Where the remains are slight, have been subject to constant ploughing, or are overlaid by later buildings, it is not always possible to be sure of identification by ground observation alone. However, in the case of the following examples, there is a clear need for isolation from the rectangular enclosed and ditched native settlements already described.

South Heddon Moor W. (no. 128⁶ and fig. 1).

The site is situated at a height of 750 feet on a flat expanse of heath, at the foot of Dod Hill, one mile to the west of Ilderton village (T/994211). Its present isolation probably accounts for the comparatively good state of preservation of the remains.⁷ The enclosed area, which is not raised above the general ground level outside the ditch,⁸ is roughly square in shape with sides of 180 feet in length. The ditch is substantial, measuring some thirty-five feet across between the crests of the inner and outer mounds and ten feet deep from the crest of the inner mound in the south-east corner. Both inner and outer mounds contain some stone and it is probable that at least the inner one was roughly faced. A notable feature is the

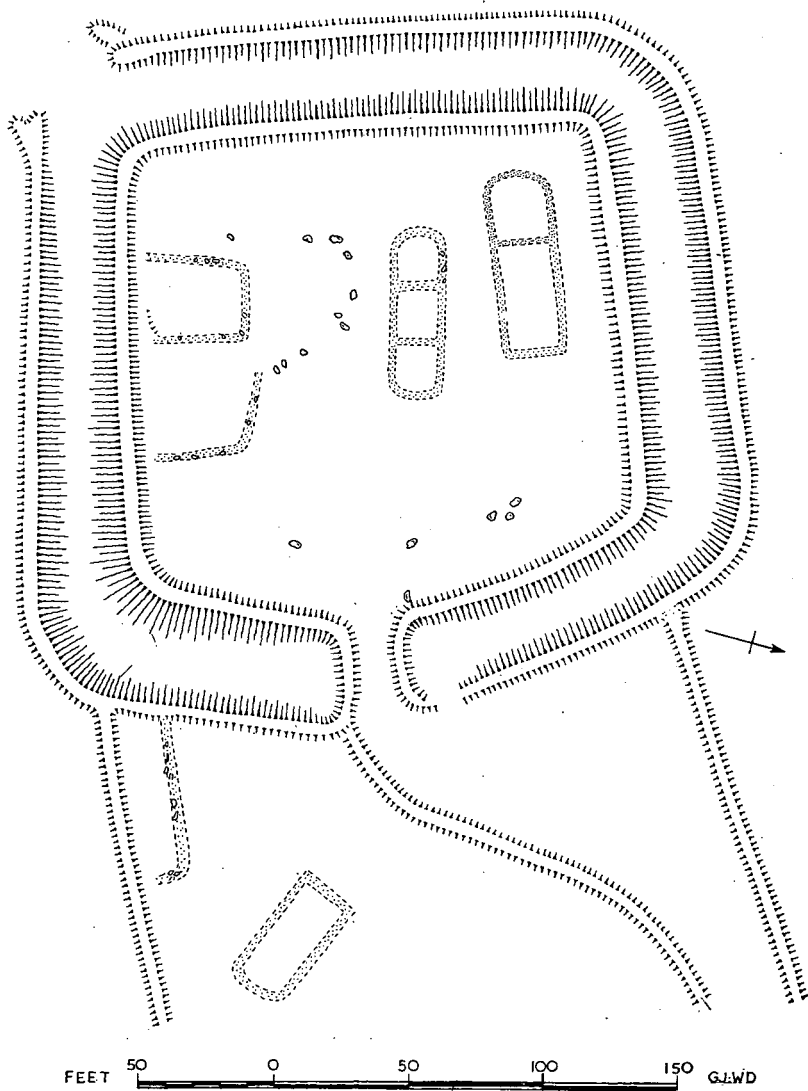
⁴ e.g. only one moated manor appears to be referred to directly as a ground feature in the County History, i.e. Belford Hall, *History of Northumberland*, vol. 1, p. 363. They seem to have been more commonly noted in Co. Durham, where there are at least seventeen possibilities.

⁵ Allcroft, *op. cit.*, and *Roxburgh*, I, p. 47.

⁶ Serial nos., where given, refer to list and distribution map of rectilinear sites in *A.A.*, ser. 4, vol. XXXVIII, pp. 18 and 35.

⁷ Even so, the attraction of the slopes of Dod Hill and Brands Hill at other times, and in different circumstances, is clear. In an area immediately to the N. of this site, roughly 2 miles N.-S. and 1 mile E.-W., there are numerous cairns including two with exposed burial cists, two hill-forts, fifteen enclosed home-steads and settlements with circular stone huts, and one medieval "reduced" village.

⁸ See Allcroft, *op. cit.*, p. 469.



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SOUTH HEDDON MOOR
ILDERTON ~

FIG. 1.

unification of the two mounds at the entrance; this would seem to be an obvious precaution if cattle were to be driven into the enclosure or the ditch was intended to be wet. The break through the outer mound in the south-west corner is later and serves at present to drain the ditch into a syke and burn which eventually empties into the Lilburn Burn to the east.

Low turf-covered mounds of stone mark the sites of internal and external buildings whose walls might have been no more than sill constructions. An impression of slightly apsidal end walls could result from the direction of the tumble; on the other hand, it is a feature noted on a number of ruined buildings in the county.⁹ One internal building has three rooms, whereas the other, sixty feet long, could be a form of "in-bye" and "out-bye" dwelling.¹⁰

Although the precise relationship between the external boundary dykes and the site must remain uncertain, those running from the north-east and south-west corners could be of contemporary date, whilst it is conceivable that the third, on the south side of the entrance, could have been added when the extra mural buildings were erected, thus restricting, but still demarcating, the way leading to the main entrance. The full extent of these features is difficult to trace; even so, the northernmost dyke seems to continue in an easterly direction for some 130 yards to the corner of an earlier native settlement containing circular stone huts (no. 127), where it turns to the south-east and, after 200 yards, runs out on the steep bank of the burn already mentioned.

It has not been possible to trace any unequivocal documentary references to this site.

The Fawns (no. 94 and fig. 2).

This earthwork has already received some mention in the publications of the Society,¹¹ but not in the context in which it is now seen. The name occurs occasionally in earlier documents. Reference is made to a John de Fawnes in 1303, and Fawnes, as a member of the manor of Wallington and a parcel of the barony of Bolbeck was, in 1421, in the possession of Sir Gilbert de Umfreville. In 1541 there was a little pelehouse or bastel at the same place, the inheritance of Sir John Fenwick.¹²

⁹ Cf. also *Roxburgh*, II, no. 952, and "black houses" in *Antiquity*, vol. XII, p. 261.

¹⁰ See e.g. Hodgson, *Northumberland*, pt. II, vol. I, p. 189. Also Aage Roussell, *Norse Building Customs in the Scottish Isles* (Copenhagen and London 1934).

¹¹ T. Ball in *Proceedings*, ser. 4, vol. 1, pp. 224-8.

¹² Hodgson, *op. cit.*, pt. II, vol. 1, pp. 23 and 195. Bates *Bolder Holds of Northumberland*, p. 46 (quoting survey of 1541). For pele and bastel see Bates, pp. 49, 57 and 61, and *Roxburgh*, vol. II, Appendix E.

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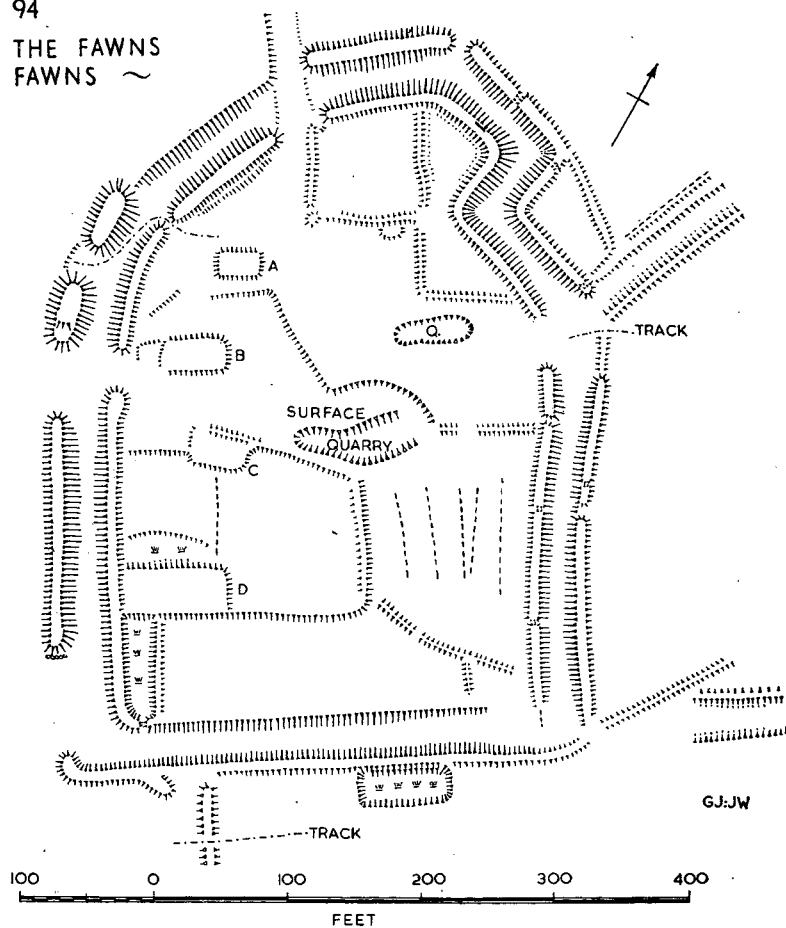
THE FAWNS
FAWNS ~

FIG. 2.

The site lies at 700 feet on a slight slope from north-west to south-east, and is adjacent to the present farm buildings (Z/007853). At the lower end the ditch is now wet, a fact which undoubtedly led Hodgson to suggest that it had been supplied with water from the Elf Hill bogs.¹³ As at Heddon Moor, the ditch is wide, varying from

¹³ Hodgson, *op. cit.*, p. 196n. Yet he proceeds to describe the site as of British origin, probably strengthened by the Romans.

thirty to forty feet across from crest to crest of the inner and outer mounds, but is no more than some five feet deep at present, except in the west where the height of the outer mound has been increased with additional upcast from later breaks. At least the inner mound of mixed earth and stone has been faced with roughly coursed stonework, still to be seen in the re-entrant on the north where the turf has been scuffed away by cattle. Surface quarries, now partly filled with rubbish, mar the interior, but four rectangular and slightly raised platforms in which there is some stone mark the sites of buildings (fig. 2, A-D). There are also slight traces of interior enclosure walls of stone, now overgrown with turf.

An intriguing feature of this site is the re-entrant formed by the ditch in the north, perhaps suggestive of an earlier structure in this area. Remains of a slight wall, upcast dyke and ditch, or hollow way, run off to the north at this point, but their precise relationship with the ditch of the main site is difficult to determine due to later interference at the point of junction. Although traces of these features have been obliterated by ploughing beyond the present field wall on the north, an aerial photograph (plate XVII) shows signs of a possible return to the west, unless this is no more than an early field boundary or even a trackway from the old surface quarry on the crest of the ridge.

A slight hollow way leads into the north-west extremity of the site, marking the position of an entrance at some stage. Remains of a slight ditch, mound and wall at the south-east corner are again poorly preserved and may be no more than old field boundaries. The boundary dyke leading from the south-west corner is apparently late, as is also the rectangular shaped excavation or pond on the south side.

Despite later disturbance this must remain one of the best preserved sites of this order in the county, with every chance of revealing earlier phases.

It is clear that the ditches of these two sites are much more substantial than those surrounding the ditched rectilinear settlements of the Roman period.¹⁴ The "return" of the mounds at the entrance to the site at South Heddon Moor constitutes a feature noted on at least two homestead moats in Roxburghshire¹⁵ and one in Dumfriesshire,¹⁶ and

¹⁴ In this connection one is reminded also of the substantial ditch which surrounds the tower at Crawley (no. 123).

¹⁵ R.C.A.M., *Roxburgh*, vol. 1, no. 7 Bloomfield and no. 273 Dykeheads.

¹⁶ R.C.A.M., *Dumfries*, no. 45 Gotterbie Moor.

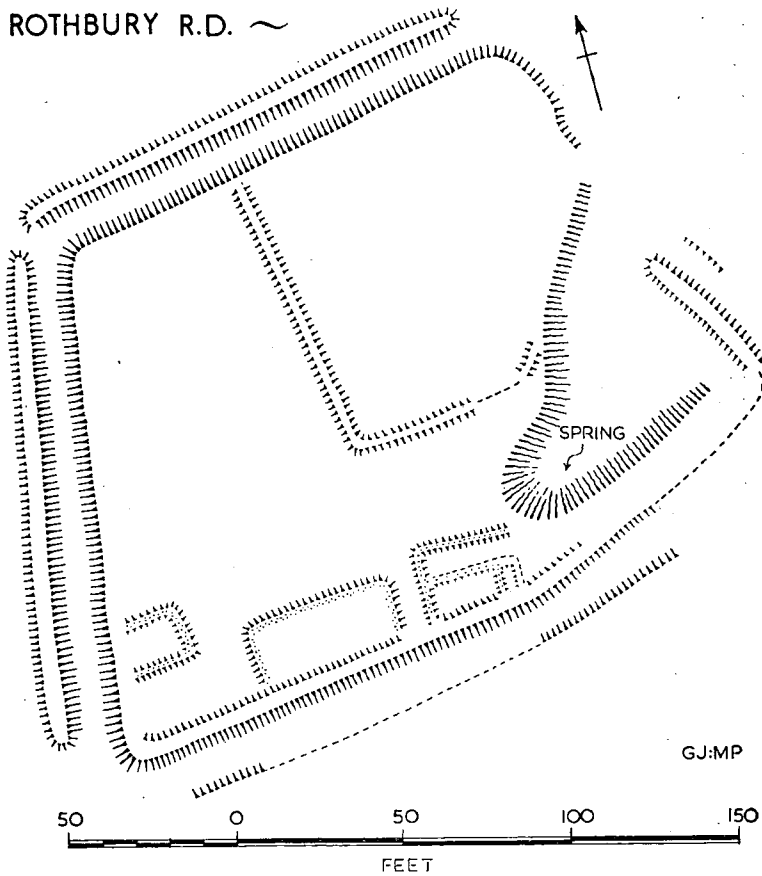
115 NEWTOWN EAST
ROTHBURY R.D. ~

FIG. 3.

could eventually prove to be of some typological value. Whether the buildings to be seen on these and other sites represent the earliest occupation, or what the precise life-span of such smaller domestic sites may have been in the north, is not certain.

In addition to the above, there are a number of less pretentious rectangular sites with slighter ditches, containing

rectangular stone buildings which seem to be an integral part of the layout. It is suggested that they can be classified more happily as medieval or later farms, rather than remain in their present context. Two examples are given, both of them well removed from the main area of distribution of the rectilinear Romano-British settlements in the county.

Newtown East (no. 115 and fig. 3).

Although only one site is given in A. H. A. Hogg's list of native sites,¹⁷ there are in fact two ditched enclosures in fairly close proximity to each other, situated at about 650 feet by the foot of the Simonside Hills (Z/032000). The western enclosure is overgrown with heather and featureless in the interior. That lying one hundred yards to the east possesses a ditch some eighteen feet wide and up to four feet deep from the crest of the outer mound, where this survives. An inner mound, containing some stone, is now visible only on the south side, clearly the higher and drier part of the interior, where there are also the overgrown foundations of three rectangular buildings. There is a large enclosure in the north-east corner which has been bounded on the interior by a stone wall. At some stage a spring has flowed in the depression immediately below the easternmost building.

The Curricks (no. 1 and fig. 4).

A site somewhat similar to that at Newtown lies in very rough pasture on Hartley Burn Common in the extreme south-west of the county. It is situated on the 750-foot contour (Y/637613). To the north-east the land rises slightly to a rock outcrop where there are some old quarry workings.

The measurement between the crests of inner and outer mounds is on average eighteen feet and the depth to the bottom of the ditch is, at present, no more than four feet. There are only the vaguest traces of a ditch on the east side where there has been a great deal of later interference; some of this may be due to the construction of what appears to be a later boundary of ditch and upcast dyke which runs towards the site on the north-east and picks up again a few feet from the south-east corner. In any event there has been an amount of robbing on the east front. There is some stone present in the inner mound and large kerbstones are still to be seen at the outturn by the entrance. Unfortunately it is impossible to decide if there has been originally a "return" of the two mounds at the entrance, as is the case at South Heddon Moor.

¹⁷ *Proceedings Soc. Ant. Newcastle*, ser. 4, vol. XI, p. 167.

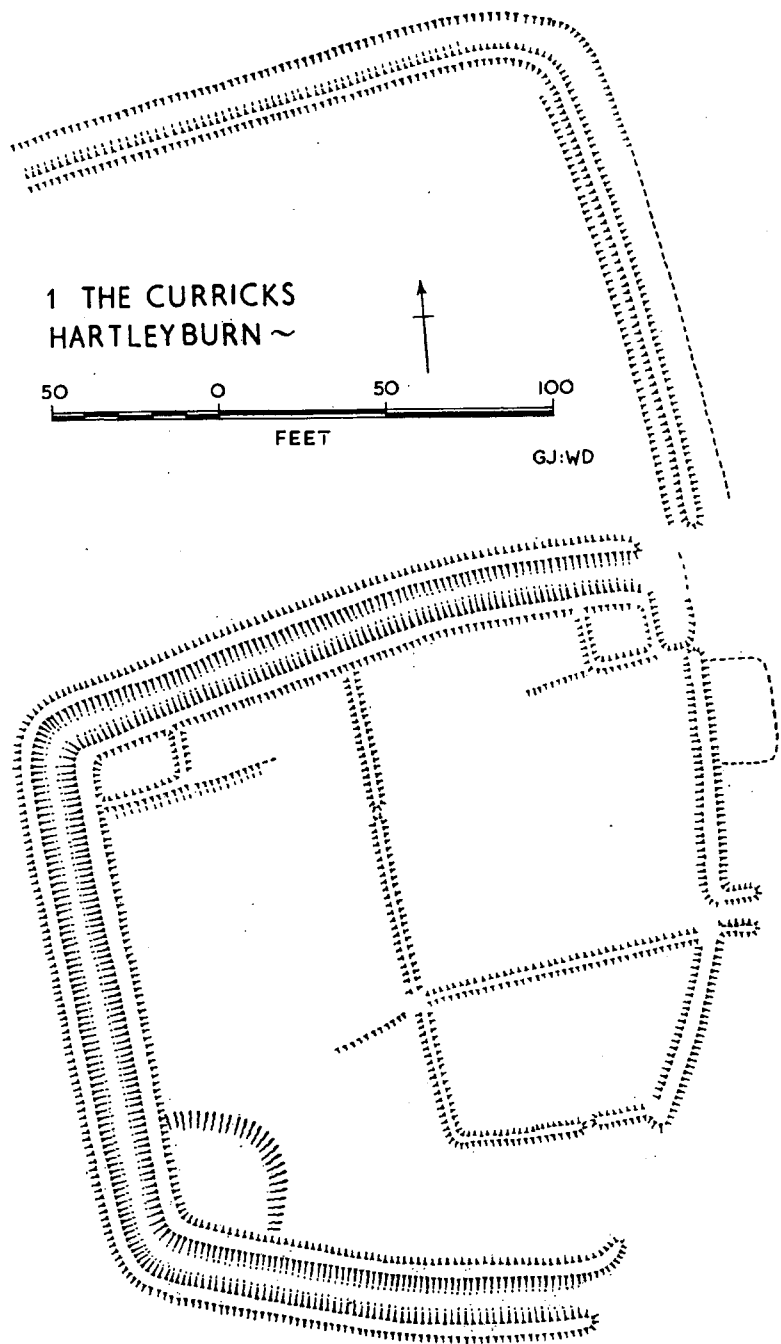


FIG. 4.

Faint traces of rectangular buildings appear immediately within the mound on the north side of the interior, which is the highest and driest situation. There have been at least two interior yards or pens. A slight hollow, now rather wet, occupies the south-west corner.

At this stage attention might be drawn to the unusual earthwork at Fozy Moss. Again this is one that has been placed in an early context and appears in the forementioned list of native sites,¹⁸ although there with the reservation of being a possible "motte", presumably because of its apparent form on the Ordnance Survey map (6" edition). The latter suggestion is probably nearer the mark in a chronological if not structural context, and the importance which it might have possessed as a native settlement, almost within a stone's throw of the Roman frontier, is consequently reduced.

Fozy Moss or Fewsey Bog (fig. 5).

This earthwork lies one hundred and fifty yards north of Hadrian's Wall, at about 750 feet, on the edge of an extensive stretch of bog (Y/817706). It is connected by a slight causeway with the low ridge which runs westwards to Sewing Shields castle and fish-ponds.

A notable feature of the site is that that platform within the ditch is raised above the normal ground level outside;¹⁹ this is particularly so on the east side, where it is some six feet above the ground level outside the ditch, although it is not so clear as to the precise extent of artificial work. The ditch is about eighteen feet wide, and, on the east side, six feet in depth from the inside lip, with an outer upcast mound as much as six feet high. From ground observation it is difficult to see the well-formed circular excavation in the north as anything but original work; it is up to nine feet deep, contains water in wet weather, and could have been a pond before the area was drained. The ditches now stop short on either side of this feature, but the precise nature of the intervening bridges of earth could be determined only by excavation.

A circular depression in the south angle of the platform is almost certainly the result of later robbing, but to the north of this lies a rectangular shaped area, bounded by turf-covered stone and prob-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹⁹ A feature noted on some homestead moats, see Allcroft, *op. cit.*, p. 469.

FOZY MOSS
SIMONBURN

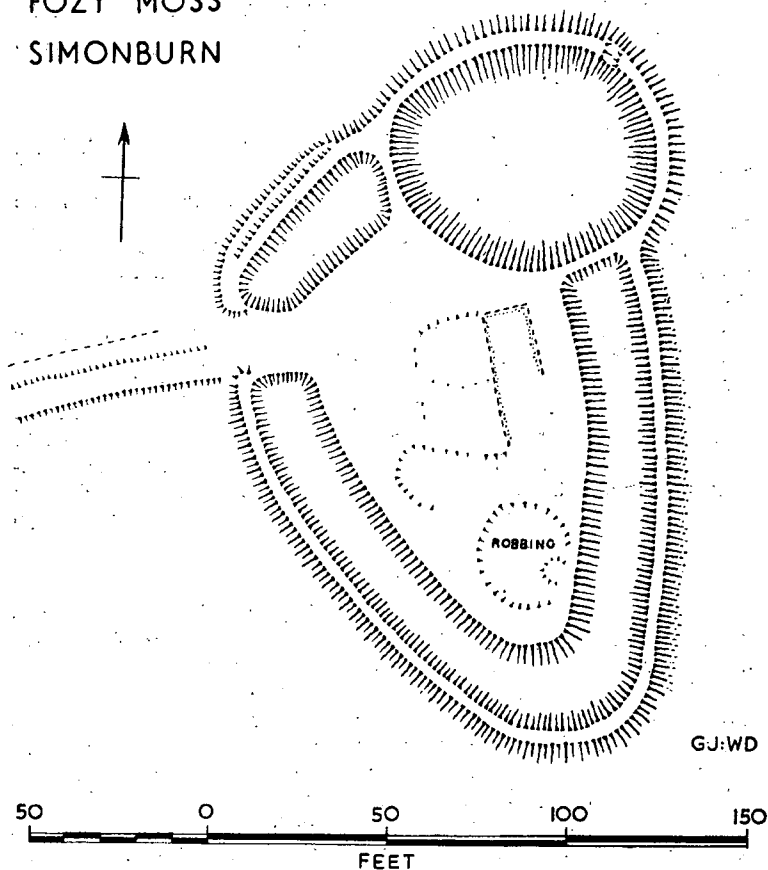


FIG. 5.

ably containing some paving, which has the appearance of having been a dwelling. There is no wall on the inside lip of the ditch, but cattle scuffing had disclosed at one point what seemed to be the section of a narrow trench, possibly for a wooden fence.

There are various remains of enclosures or shielings on the ridge between this site and that of Sewing Shields Castle, providing at least a topographical link between the two.

Later Farmsteads.

Three examples are given where there is no ditched enclosure. Once again elimination from an early context is clearly necessary.

Hazeldean (fig. 6).

This is given in A. H. A. Hogg's list of native sites as Nightfolds, a village,²⁰ following MacLauchlan's *Memoir on the Roman Wall*. In view of the possible confusion arising from the placing of the name on some of the earlier editions of the O.S. maps and the probable nature of the site itself, it seems desirable to rename it. It lies some six hundred yards north of the Wall frontier and a short distance to the west of Hazel Dean (Y/958698).

Although marred by later quarrying and robbing, the site as we see it now is clearly of comparatively recent date. It consists of a series of long rectangular buildings with enclosed yards, and one rather square and slightly raised platform to the north. Though there are two other farms in the vicinity, that at Keepwick Fell to the west and the present farm of Errington Hill Head to the south-east, it seems highly likely that this could be the site of Heselden, a freehold held by Thomas Errington, paying a rent of fifteen shillings in 1547.²¹

Villains Bog (no. 97 and fig. 7).

A similar, though smaller site is that at Villains Bog, three-quarters of a mile to the south-west of Hartburn Grange (Z/052861). Here there have been at least two and probably three rectangular buildings with the remains of enclosure walls, now no more than low turf-covered mounds of stone. The area known as Villains Bog is the traditional site of an old nightfold or pen, where neighbouring flocks were herded and on one occasion robbed by a party of moss troopers, with dire results.²² In effect, the description and situation would fit better the ditched enclosure listed by Hogg as Grange Moor, situated about three hundred and fifty yards to the north-east.²³ No early documentary evidence relating to the site at Villains Bog can be traced, unless by small chance it is the Cumber-ton referred to by Hodgson as possibly lying between Middleton Morell (North) and Hartburn Grange.²⁴

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 117.

²¹ *History of Northumberland*, vol. IV, p. 196. See also reference to use of Roman stones from the Wall at Nightfolds, *The Roman Wall* (2nd Ed. 1852), p. 137.

²² Hodgson, *op. cit.*, pt. II, vol. I, p. 302.

²³ As some local tradition favours, see *In Troublesome Times* (ed. R. E. Bosanquet), p. 168.

²⁴ Hodgson, *ibid.*, p. 329.

HAZELDEAN
COCKLAW~

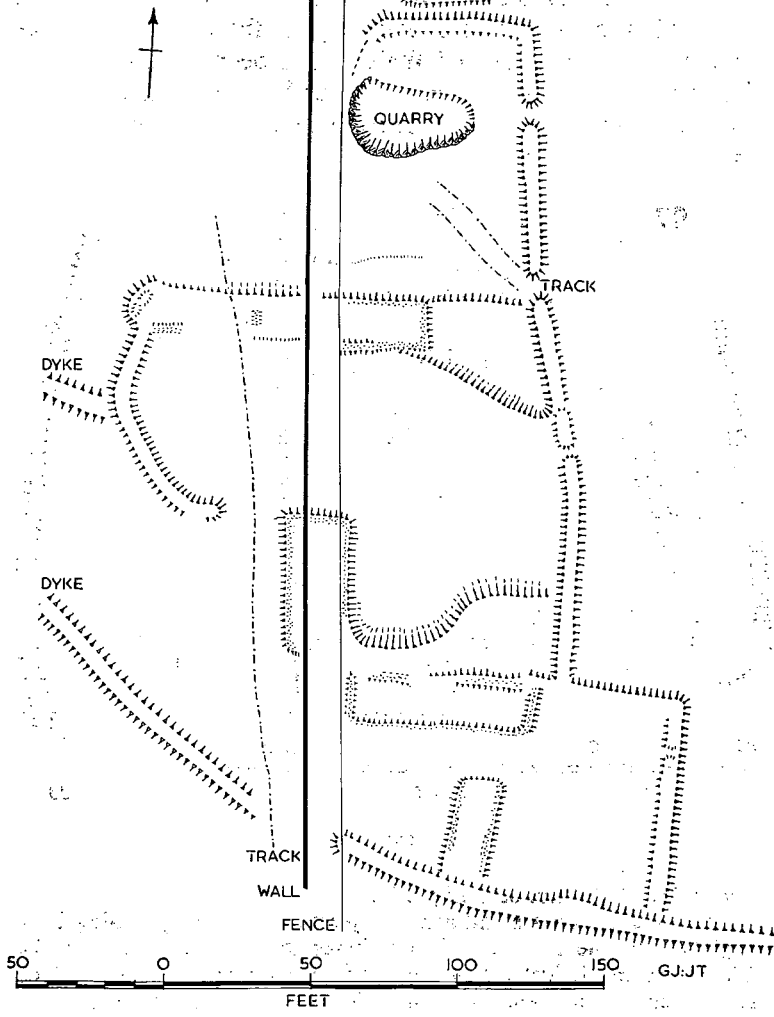


FIG. 6.

“Scooped” sites and “platform” sites of various forms and possibly of widely different dates, require separate treatment. As a method of construction it could have a long history in the hill country. Although nothing exactly similar to the platform-houses of Wales²⁵ has been encountered in the survey to present, attention may be drawn at this stage to the small rectangular shaped site at Crookdean, as an example of late construction.

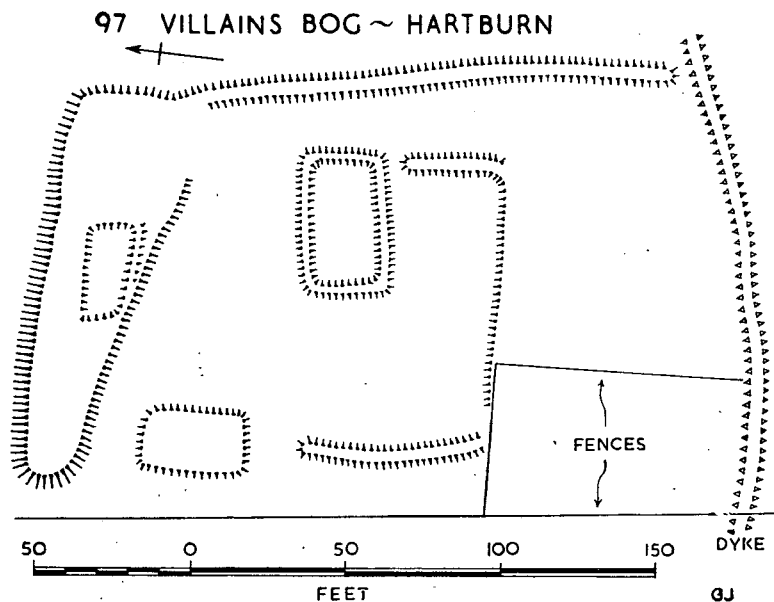


FIG. 7.

Crookdean S.W. (no. 85 and fig. 8).

The site lies on a small artificial platform, made by cutting back slightly into the hill-side. It overlooks the source stream of the Wansbeck and is just below the 700-foot contour (Y/973822). The full extent of the enclosure wall is doubtful, but there remains beneath the turf faint traces of two dwellings, either with porches or of “but-and-ben” type. This site could have had a connection

²⁵ *Arch. Camb.*, vol. CIII (1954), p. 18 ff., and CVIII (1959), 72 ff.

at some stage with the known hamlet of Crookdean,²⁶ probably situated beneath the present Crookdean farm, where faint traces of earthworks have also been listed as a native site.

The examples quoted, as already stated, are no more than a sample of the by-products of an examination of some

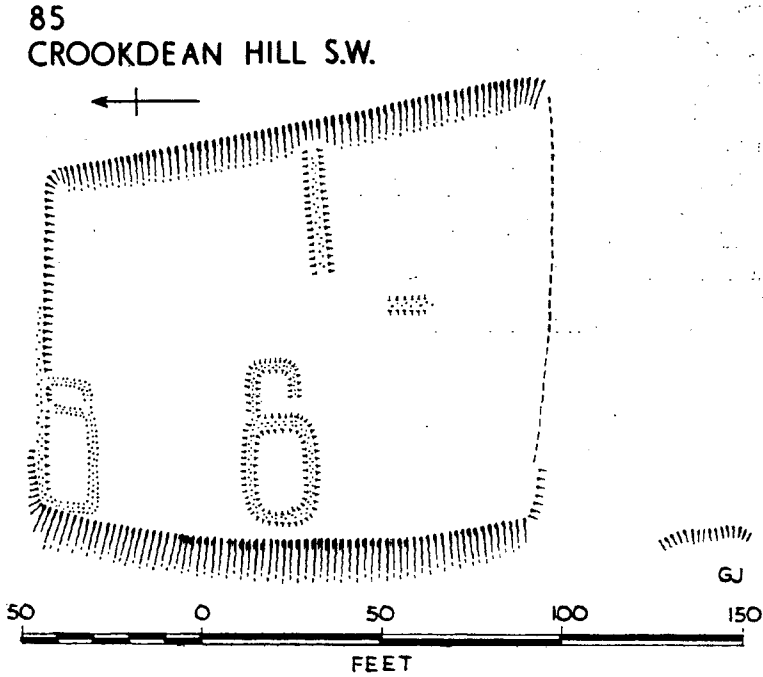


FIG. 8.

classes of native sites listed by Mr. A. H. A. Hogg. As he himself appreciated,²⁷ it was possible that some of the sites, particularly those in his rectilinear class, might not be of very high antiquity. It is hoped that the suggestions will serve both as a reminder of the necessity of field survey in the process of refining such noteworthy and comprehensive

²⁶ *History of Northumberland*, vol. IV, p. 410.

²⁷ *Antiquity*, vol. XVII, p. 140.

inventories, and perhaps as an incentive to other members of the Society, probably better qualified to deal with the necessary documentary evidence, to follow up similar possibilities on the ground. Small hamlets, "long houses", mills and corn drying kilns, and, no doubt more difficult, such structures as the strong timber houses of the head-men of Tynedale,²⁸ are but a few of the less spectacular remains in need of location and attention. This is particularly so in those areas of the county in which present isolation may have kept them from close study and destruction alike, but where the marching plantations will enfold them, unwittingly yet surely, in an oblivion that possesses little security.

I remain most grateful to Messrs. J. Tait and A. Bankier and, in particular, to Mr. W. Dodds for their continued assistance in the work of field survey.

²⁸ *Arch. Ael.*, ser. 3, vol. XIV, p. 49.