

IV

EXCAVATIONS ON THE ROMANO-BRITISH SETTLEMENT AT MIDDLE GUNNAR PEAK, BARRASFORD, NORTHUMBERLAND

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THE PROMINENT escarpment known as Gunnar Crag, lying 5 km to the north of Hadrian's Wall, first achieved notice in the pages of *Archaeologia Aeliana* almost a century ago when the Rev. Rome Hall, then Rector of Birtley in North Tynedale, excavated the westernmost of three settlements along the crest of the crags (Rome Hall, 1884). This Romano-British settlement, known as West Gunnar Peak, was subsequently re-excavated by A. H. A. Hogg in 1941, but has since been removed by quarrying (Hogg, 1942).

The settlement at Middle Gunnar Peak, situated about 80 m to the east at NY 9150 7500, lay within the area where the next extension to the Barrasford quarry was planned. Accordingly, excavations were carried out in the summer and autumn of 1978 with financial assistance from the Department of the Environment and a generous contribution plus assistance in kind from Tarmac Roadstone (Northern) Ltd., the owners of the quarry. The writer is also grateful to Derek Welsby and David Metcalfe who acted as site supervisors, to the volunteers who assisted in the excavations, to Mr. J. P. Gillam for discussion of the Roman pottery, and to Dr. J. Weyman for a report on the cremated bone.

Resources did not allow the excavation of the whole area of the settlement, and, on the assumption that it would prove to be Romano-British in its main context, investigation was chiefly directed towards two aspects. The first of these was to ascertain if there had been an earlier timber-built phase, as found recently on similar settlements in upper North Tynedale (e.g. Jobey, G., 1973, 1978), and the second to examine the possibility of there having been some growth in the size of the settlement during its occupation, together with more specific contexts for such a development.

SITE AND LOCATION (fig. 1)

The underlying rock surface of this north-facing escarpment is composed of limestone through which large areas of whinstone protrude. The south-facing slope is cut at intervals by small ravines, one of which lay between the settlement of West and Middle Gunnar Peak. Although the western site formerly obtained some protection from the eminence of Gunnar Peak to the west, the site of Middle Gunnar Peak was rather exposed at an altitude of 162 m O.D. and the whole area was given over

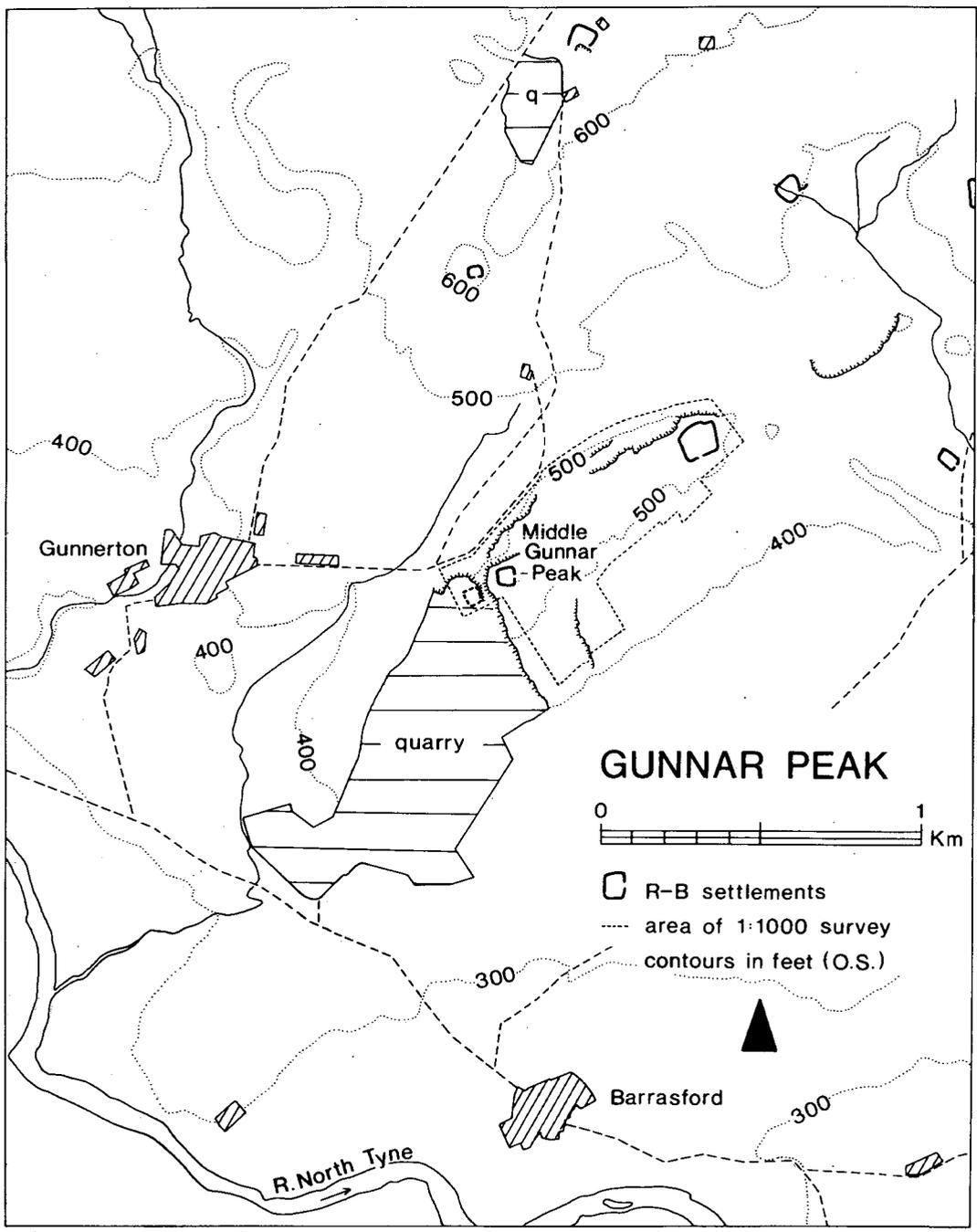


Fig. 1.

MIDDLE GUNNAR PEAK
1978

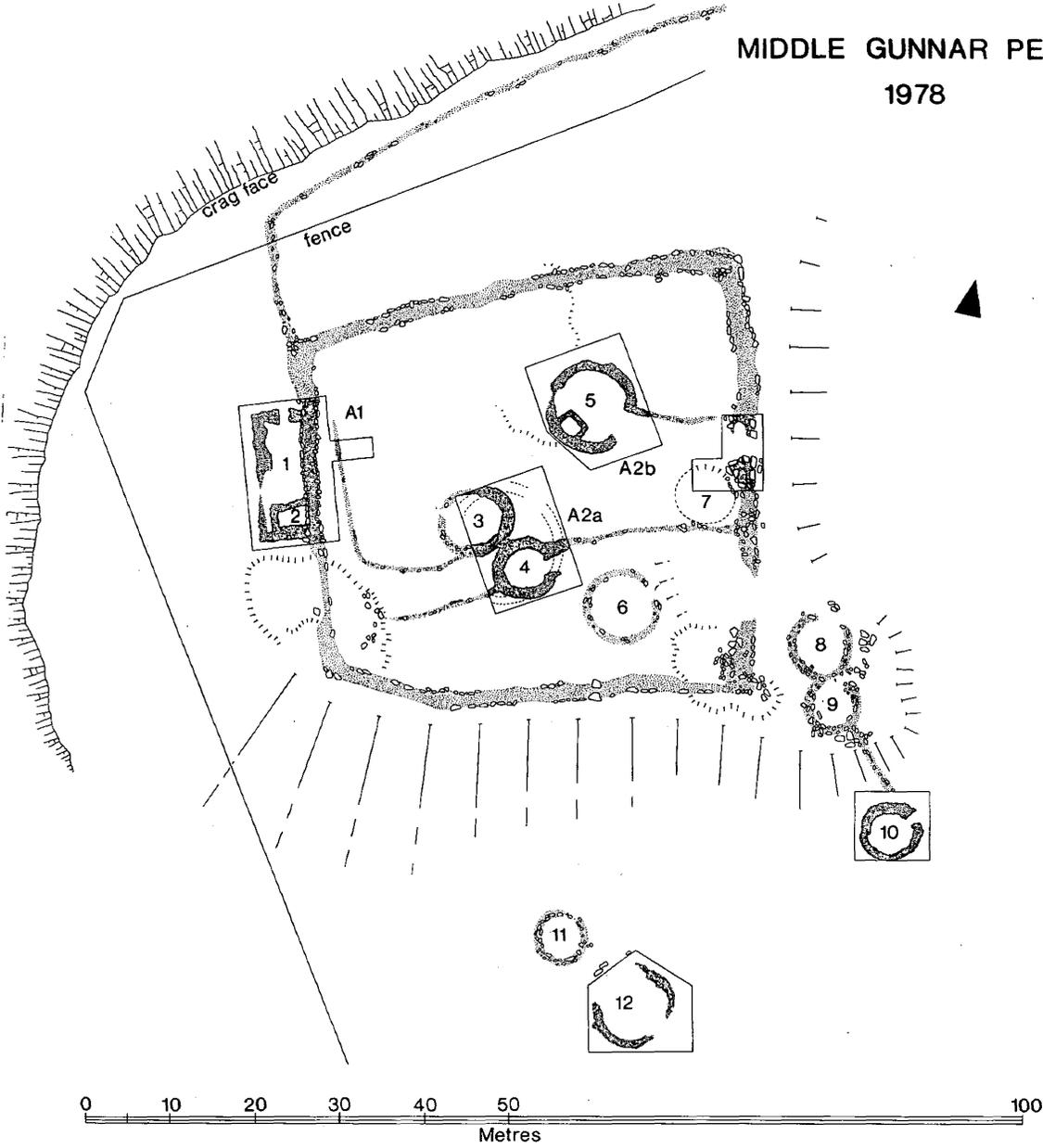


Fig. 2.

to rough grazing. In the past, however, the southern tail of the crags has been cultivated, as is evident from the presence of extensive rig and furrow which would have obliterated any cultivation system that might have been associated with the earlier settlements. Similarly, a series of linear banks demarcating small enclosures on a shelf on the north face of the crags, lying to the east of Middle Gunnar Peak, would seem to be of more recent origin than the settlements themselves. It is possible that these enclosures and the rig and furrow cultivation could both be associated with the remains of later rectangular shaped buildings attached to the settlement of Middle Gunnar Peak and overlying that on East Gunnar Peak.

The settlement at Middle Gunnar Peak was easily traceable on the ground before excavation (fig. 2). Whinstone orthostats used in the construction of the enclosure walls protruded through the turf in many places and the tumbled walls of five round houses together with traces of division walls were visible in the interior. Five additional sites of round houses were also discernible beyond the enclosure to the south and east. The remains of a large rectangular building were attached to the west of the enclosure and a low wall ran from the north-west corner of the settlement along the crest of the crags to the remains of a second but smaller rectangular building further to the east. These apparently later structures, including a small shelter built into the remains of one of the internal round houses, had no doubt contributed to the very robbed character of the original settlement. The only other feature in the immediate area was the remains of what appeared to be a small burial cairn, situated on a low ridge some 80 m to the east of the main enclosure.

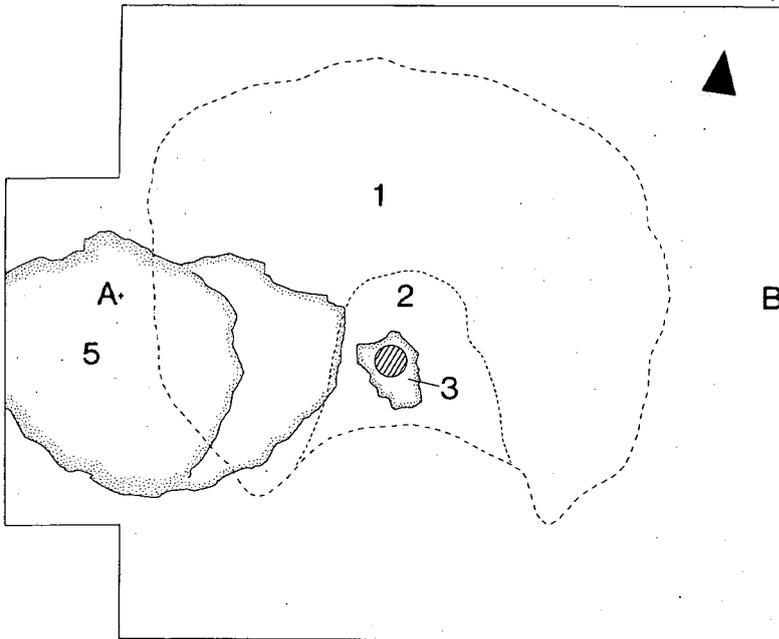
THE EXCAVATION

Because of the extremely broken nature of the ground the excavation was an entirely manual operation and was hindered in its later stages by extensive flooding, despite the elevation of the site.

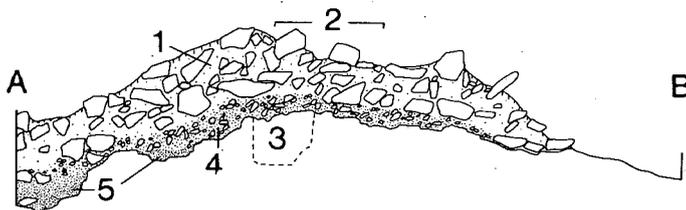
1. The Burial Cairn (fig. 3)

The cairn stood to a height of only 0.8 m above the present surface and was at most 5 m in overall diameter. In excavation it proved to be entirely of piled stone with no retaining kerbstones, so that there had been an appreciable spread of material down the eastern slope. A robber trench, partly backfilled with rubble and earth, had been driven into the mound from the south side (fig. 3.2). Intermixed with this backfilling were many small fragments of bone from the cremation of a child together with sherds from a small cordoned vessel with incised decoration (fig. 9.2); these remains were almost certainly those of a secondary interment, disturbed during the process of robbing. Although the later interference had extended beyond the centre of the cairn it had not disturbed a more or less centrally placed cremation in a small rock-cut pit (fig. 3.3). This pit was irregularly shaped, 0.35 m deep below the natural surface, and contained an inverted, cordoned urn within which were the cremated remains of another young child accompanied by an unburnt bone blade (fig. 9.3).

plan



section A-B



Gunnar Peak : Cairn



Metres

Fig. 3.

Although the base of the urn was missing, the vessel appeared to have been broken in antiquity and not as a result of the later robbing; no base sherds from this vessel were found amongst the debris in the robber trench and the pit containing this cremation had been sealed by a band of stony brash before the cairn itself had been erected (fig. 3.4).

2. *The Settlement*

a. The enclosure wall

This wall was composed of an earth and rubble core between massive whinstone blocks measuring up to 1.5×0.5 m and 1 m thick. In some places it was up to 3 m wide and the whole structure rested directly on the stony yellow subsoil or natural whinstone outcrop. Although it nowhere survived over 1 m in height to the tops of the boulders, there was a considerable amount of tumble, particularly in the interior, so that it could well have attained an original height of more than 1.5 m. Because of the difficulty encountered in removing some of the larger boulders in the time available, the wall was completely cleared away in only one section. Elsewhere the core was removed in certain sections and an additional area was cleared at the entrance through the east wall of the enclosure. No trace of an earlier timber-built line was found beneath the enclosure wall or in any of the adjacent internal and external areas which were investigated, so that in this instance there would seem to have been no earlier timber-built settlement.

The east-facing entrance to the enclosure had been extensively robbed, especially on the north side, and no revetment survived on either side. Entry had been made over the natural surface of the rock so that the width of the gateway could only be estimated tentatively at *c.* 2 m. As there were no postholes for a timber structure it must be assumed that the gate had been of simple construction, in keeping with the generally non-defensive nature of the settlement.

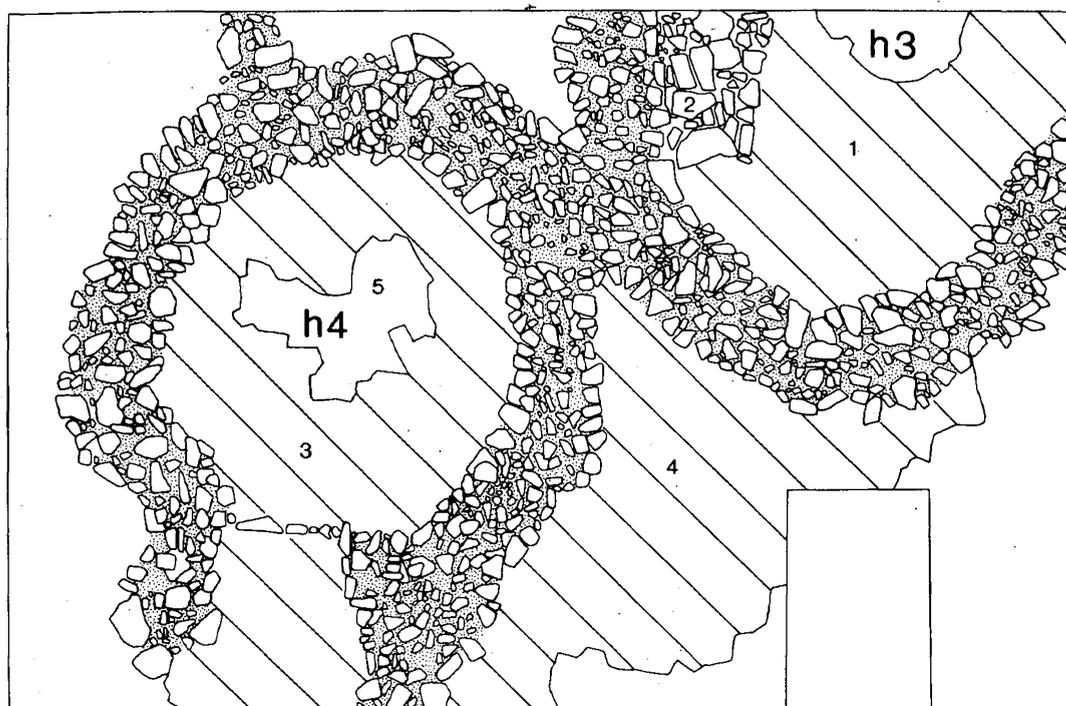
No finds were recovered from beneath the wall of the enclosure and the few sherds of Roman coarse pottery from beneath the disturbed tumble in the entrance are essentially undatable.

b. The interior

Three of the visible houses in the interior were examined, these being houses numbered 3, 4 and 5 in areas 2a and 2b, and a fourth, earlier house came to light during the course of excavation (fig. 2).

House 3 (fig. 4)

The wall of house 3, which at one point was contiguous with that of house 4, was *c.* 1 m wide and had been faced on both sides with irregularly shaped blocks of stone containing a rubble and earth core: in the excavated part of the interior it still survived two courses high. The interior diameter of the house was just over 6 m but no entrance existed in the arc that was excavated, so that, most unusually, the doorway must have lain in the west. Most of the interior floor level had been paved



Gunnar Peak : Area 2a, period 2

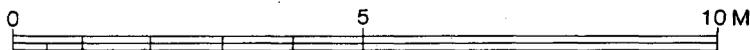


Fig. 4.

and in the southern segment a low bench of large flagstones had been constructed on top of the original paving, contiguous with the house wall (fig. 4.2). There were no internal postholes, so that if timber uprights had been used as roof supports these could only have been lodged between the paving stones, and any roofing spars would have run down to the top of the house wall.

Sherds of Roman pottery, mainly from amphorae and none closely datable, were recovered from the flagged floor. From beneath the tumble of the wall within the north-eastern arc came a rim sherd from a jar, probably Hadrianic-Antonine in date. Fragments of castor ware in the rubble packing under the top of the stone bench provide a *terminus post quem* for the construction of this feature in the mid-second century A.D. As a whole the material is consistent with an occupation of the house in the mid or later second century A.D.

House 4 (fig. 4)

The wall of this house was constructed in a manner similar to that of house 3 and was up to 1.5 m wide, surviving up to three courses high on the interior and enclosing an area of *c.* 5 m diameter. A low rubble wall, of one build with the wall of house 4, ran from the north side of the doorway to the eastern end of the enclosure, demarcating a small interior yard. The interior of the house was paved, apart from a small area in the centre of the floor (fig. 4.5), and this paving extended through the doorway to the exterior. At the inner end of the doorway a transverse slot between the paving stones could have provided a drop-trench for the door or for a stone-built threshold similar to those found elsewhere in stone-built houses of the period. As in the case of house 3 no purpose-built hearth survived in the interior.

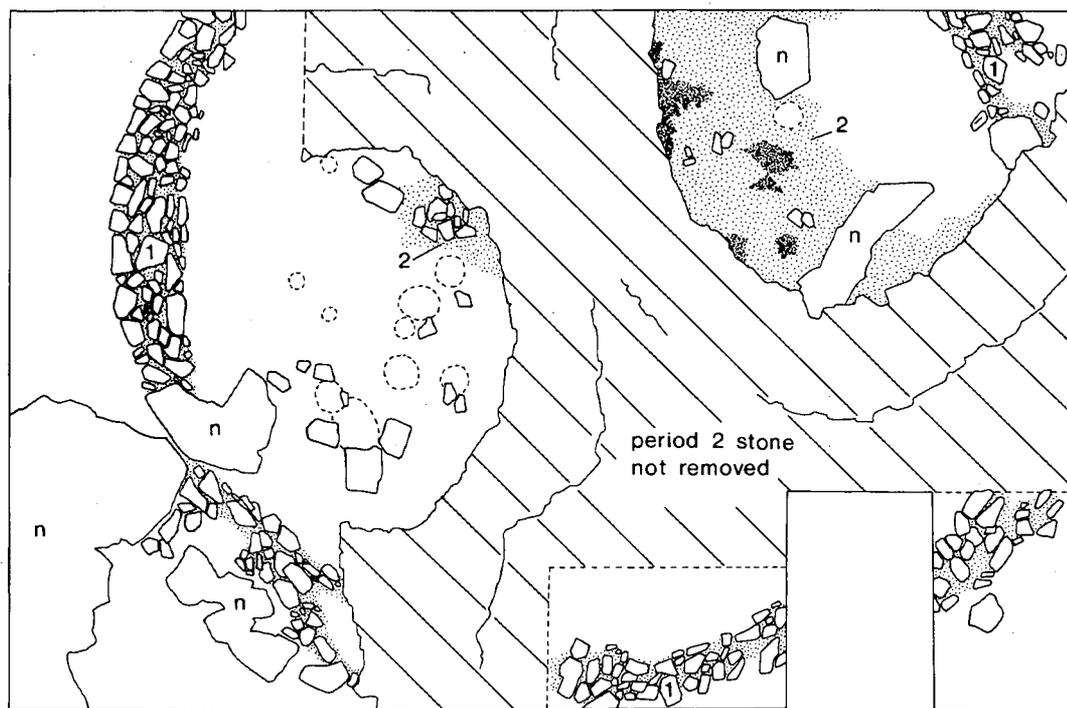
Several fragments of native and Roman pottery came from the interior flagstones, together with small fragments of bone and coal. Sherds which were sealed by the internal tumble from the house walls included a fragment of Samian ware of form 18/31, the rim of a cooking pot in BB1, several wall sherds of imitation BB1 cooking pot with cross-hatching and the base from a castor ware vessel. These sherds were again consistent with an occupation in the mid to later second century A.D.

Outside the east wall of house 3 paving had been laid in the gaps between the natural outcrops of whinstone which lay immediately below the turf. This paving did not extend beneath the walls of houses 3 and 4 and probably served as an exterior working area (fig. 4.4). The only find from this area, however, was a fragment of an opaque white glass bangle of Romano-British type. Both houses also had low rubble walls running from their western sides to the rear of the enclosure. Although neither of these was excavated it could be seen from surface observation that they had enclosed additional interior yards.

Earlier, Phase 1 House (fig. 5)

Broken quernstones from the tumble in the doorway of house 3 and a pivot and quernstones re-used as paving in the floors of houses 3 and 4 indicated that these were not necessarily the earliest structures on the site. In addition the walls of both houses appeared to be resting on a made-up surface rather than directly on bed-rock or the patchy yellow subsoil. The paving from both houses and the southern arc of the wall of house 4 were removed and further clearance of 10–15 cm of underlying make-up revealed the remains of the wall of an earlier house, in this instance probably as much as 12 m in diameter, (fig. 5.1). The wall was best preserved on its southern arc, where it was 1 m wide and still retained a single course of facing stones on both sides, resting directly on the rock surface or natural subsoil. A thin band of black occupation earth survived over parts of the interior and included several patches of burning containing charcoal and fragments of burnt bone (fig. 5.2). A number of small postholes cut into the subsoil, none of them more than 35 cm deep, probably marked the positions of uprights to support the roof.

Several sherds of native pottery, all from barrel-shaped vessels with incurving rims, were recovered from the occupation earth or from over the remains of the wall



Gunnar Peak : Area 2a, period 1

- p.1 postholes
n natural outcrop

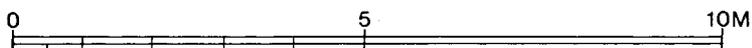


Fig. 5.

(e.g. fig. 9.5–6). In addition, sherds of Roman pottery were found at the base of the make-up material, including fragments of vessels with everted rims of Flavian-Hadrianic date (fig. 9.8–9) and a fragment of glass bangle with cable inlay (fig. 10.1). Despite the fact that the sample of datable material was small, it is notable that there were no sherds of Antonine or later date. It may be that this large house was a primary dwelling within the enclosure, if not the only one, which had been abandoned at least by the mid-second century A.D. and subsequently replaced by houses 3 and 4.

House 5 (fig. 6)

This was the largest house visible on the surface within the enclosure and after excavation proved to be 8.5 m in internal diameter with an east-facing doorway. For most of the circumference the wall stood no more than one course in height,



Gunnar Peak: Area 2b, house 5

n natural outcrop



Fig. 6.

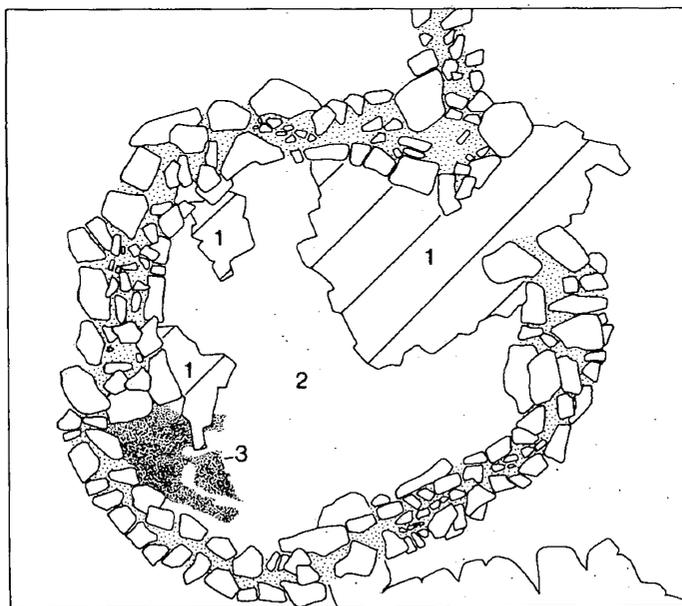
mainly because of robbing for the later construction of a "keb house" or pen in the south-western quadrant (fig. 6.5a). The floor of the house consisted of natural rock surface levelled up where necessary with rubble overlaid by paving. Small patches of occupation earth remained on those parts of the house floor which had not been cleared for the later structure, but there were no postholes for interior roof supports or for a door frame. A low rubble wall ran from the doorway of the house to the north side of the entrance to the main enclosure, thus forming a small yard in the north-eastern angle.

The finds which came from the occupation earth on the house floor consisted of several sherds of native ware and Roman coarse pottery, but all were undatable. Two fragments of glass bangles and half a stone spindle whorl were also found amongst the brown soil and rubble of the disturbed core of the house wall.

c. The exterior houses

House 10 (fig. 7)

This house was isolated to the south-east of the main enclosure, lying downslope



Gunnar Peak : House 10



Fig. 7.



a. House 3.



b. Wall of earlier house, House 3 partly removed.



a. House 5.



b. House 10.

from houses 8 and 9 to which it was linked by the low remains of a wall. Excavation revealed a somewhat elliptically-shaped house of 5.5 m maximum internal diameter which was of much more uneven construction than the internal houses. The eastern arc was composed of large irregular blocks facing a rubble core, the whole being over 1 m thick, whilst the western arc was of much less massive construction. The two differing constructions were not strictly aligned at the rear of the house and it seemed probable that one or other arc represented a replacement, though no sequence could be defined. A doorway, barely 1 m wide, lay in the north-east and was revetted with massive boulders. Both the passageway and the area immediately inside had been roughly paved with stones laid directly on the subsoil, and one upright stone, set into the paving at the doorway, could have served as a doorstep. No traces of interior postholes or other means of roof support were found.

Several fragments of native pottery and a single sherd of amphora came from a layer of dark occupation earth which had accumulated towards the rear of the house (fig. 7.3). Unfortunately, these finds were not sufficient to establish a comparative sequence between house 10 and the houses within the main enclosure.

House 12

This was apparently the largest of the houses outside the enclosure, being situated on a sheltered and level piece of land to the south. Only the remnants of the walls survived with a few large facing blocks in the style of house 10. The doorway appeared to have been in the east, but no attempt had been made to pave this or the interior which was probably *c.* 10 m in diameter. An absence of tumble from the walls, together with the sterile nature of the "floor" and the total absence of any small finds suggests that the house might not have been occupied for any length of time or even completed.

House 8

As the excavation of houses 10 and 12 had produced little concrete dating evidence for the occupation of these external buildings, work began on house 8 towards the end of the investigations. The walls of the house were of the usual rubble construction with a rudimentary facing and the floor was the natural whinstone outcrop, unaccompanied by any paving in the area which was excavated. Unfortunately, no artefacts had been recovered when the excavations were terminated because of a succession of blizzards and a lack of further resources.

3. *The "Longhouse" (fig. 8)*

From surface observation this building appeared as a single, rectangular-shaped structure abutting on to the west wall of the Romano-British enclosure, but in excavation two structural periods were established. The first was a long, rectangular building measuring about 13.5 × 4.5 m internally, the north, west and south walls being on average 1 m wide and consisting of a rubble and earth core faced on both sides with large blocks surviving up to four courses high. The east wall was

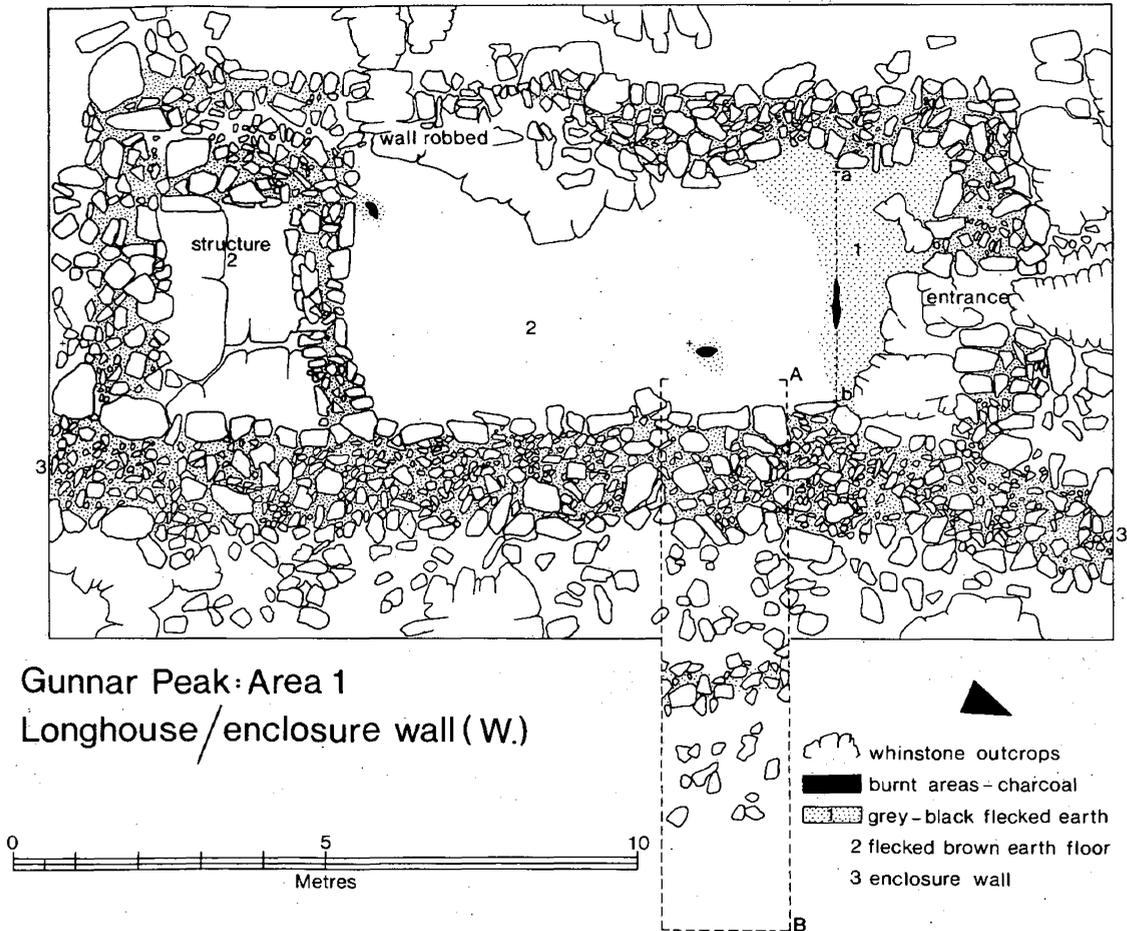


Fig. 8.

formed by the much wider pre-existing west wall of the Romano-British enclosure. The north wall of the building butted on to this. The doorway lay on the north side, being revetted with large boulders surviving to two courses high. It was 1 m wide, and because of the expansions on the terminals of the north wall, the passageway was about 2 m long over solid bedrock in which there were no postholes or location for uprights. The irregular, interior floor level consisted of smeared, greyish-brown earth, broken at frequent intervals by rock outcrop, and becoming increasingly dark and more heavily flecked towards the entrance. In the absence of a hearth and of any paving on the irregular floor level, it may be that this building had not served a strictly domestic function.

Part of the west wall and most of the southern wall of this building had been intensively robbed, probably for the building of a smaller and almost certainly later

structure which had been inserted into the rear of the original building, also abutting on to the original enclosure wall. This building measured 2.2 × 1.5 m internally, and its rough rubble walls survived up to six courses high on the north side. Surprisingly, no doorway could be found, and there was no connecting doorway between this structure and the original building. In the circumstances it is not possible to suggest a function, other than the possibility of a late shelter or lambing-pen, a "keb house", similar to the structure found within house 5.

The only finds consisted of a sherd of iron age or Romano-British native pottery from the floor material in the original building and a pierced whetstone from the tumble of the ruinous west wall, both of which were probably derived from the Romano-British settlement. Although the large rectangular structure has some resemblance to buildings of the later medieval period that have been excavated elsewhere in North Tynedale, no positive definition of its dating or function is possible in the present circumstances.

FINDS

BURIAL CAIRN (fig. 9, nos. 1-3)

1. The major part of a cinerary urn, with raised cordon and scored decoration on the top of the rim and intermittently on the body. Very coarse greyish-brown granular fabric with large grits. Base missing. From pit 3, inverted, and containing cremation [GP 1].
2. 20 fragments from a small urn with cordon and incised, cross-hatched decoration, in light brown, sandy fabric. In this case probably not an accessory vessel. From robber-trench, loosely associated with many fragments of cremated bone [GP 2].
3. Fragment of bone blade or knife, 80 mm long. Unburnt, but found amongst cremated bone contained in large urn in pit 3 [GP 101].

ROMANO-BRITISH SETTLEMENT

A. *Native hand-built pottery*

1. (Fig. 9.4) 1 rim and 1 wall fragment from vessel with incurving, slightly rounded rim. Reddish-buff fabric with small grits. Topsoil house 10 [GP 64].
2. (Fig. 9.5) Large, incurving rim sherd from bowl-like vessel with flat rim. Grey-black fabric with large white grits, surfaces oxidized and displaying evident pinch-marks. From deep in tumble from phase 1 house [GP 84].
3. (Fig. 9.6) Incurving rim fragment with rounded rim. Fabric as 2 above. From occupation earth associated with phase 1 house, sealed by floor of house 3 [GP 95].
4. Base fragment from jar. Fabric as 2 above. From tumble inside wall of house 4 [GP 41].
5. Wall sherd, fabric as 2 above. From floor of "longhouse" [GP 16].
6. Wall sherd in black fabric with large black grits. Sealed by tumble on floor of house 10 [GP 64].

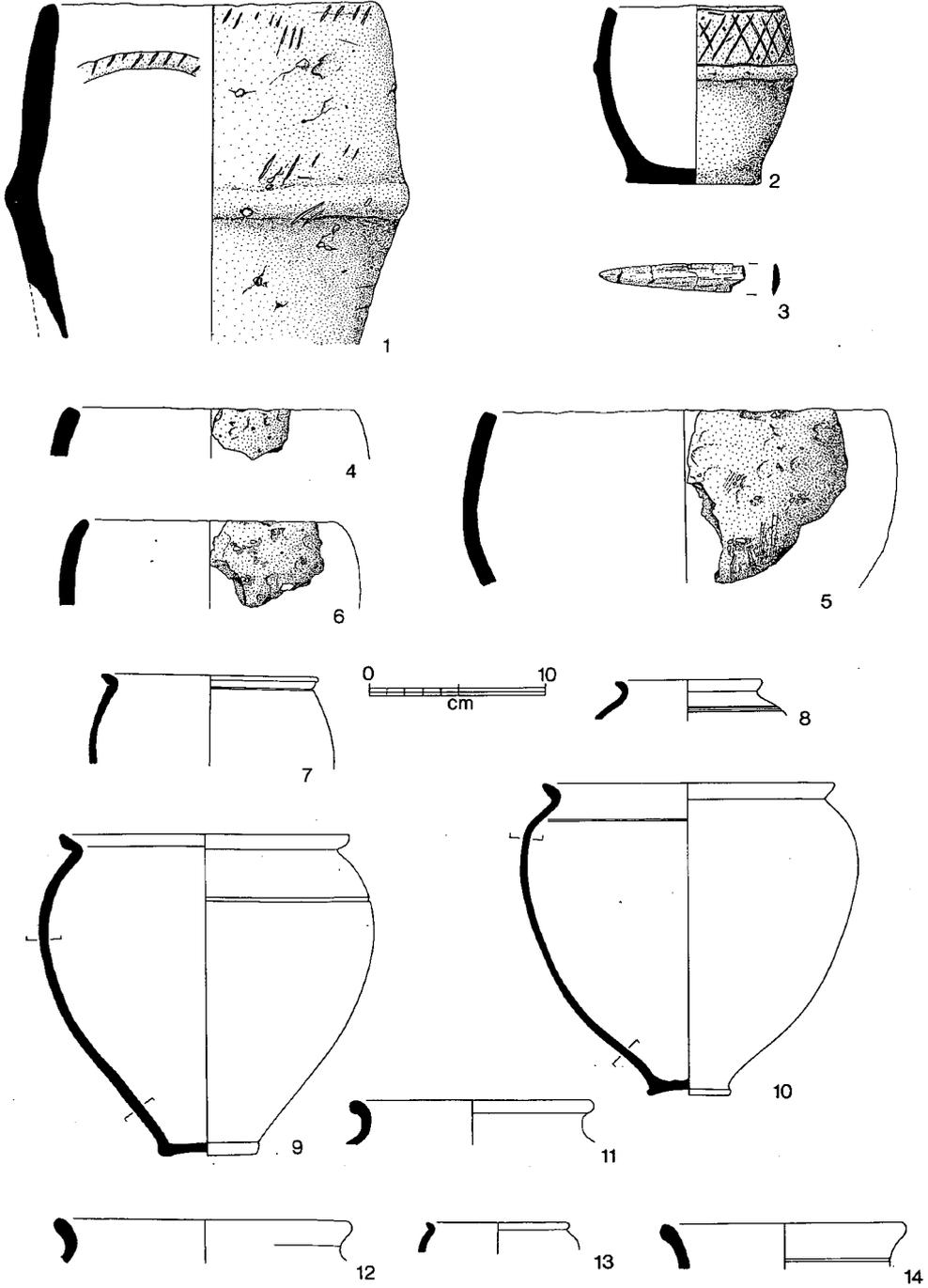


Fig. 9. (¼) Pottery.

7. Large wall fragment in very coarse, buff-coloured fabric with large light coloured grits. From core of wall of phase 1 house [GP 81].
8. Three conjoining wall fragments in greyish-black fabric with large white grits. Provenance as 7 above [GP 88].
9. Several wall sherds in various fabrics, unstratified.

B. Roman Pottery

Samian Ware

Rim fragment of small bowl, form 18/31, pierced for repair. From the floor of house 4, sealed by tumble from the walls.

Fine Ware

1. (Fig. 9.7) Two rim and two wall sherds from plain castor-ware beaker with cornice rim. Found together with several fragments of crumbly, orange-red ware of no recognizable form beneath stone bench in southern quadrant of house 3 [GP 26].
2. Two fragments from base of castor ware beaker. From floor of house 4, sealed by wall tumble [GP 46].
3. Complete base of castor ware cup. From beneath flagged floor of house 4 [GP 70(i)].

Coarse Ware

1. (Fig. 9.8) Rim fragment of thin-walled, everted rim jar with two horizontal grooves below rim, in smooth, dark grey fabric. From brashy layer sealed by houses 3 and 4, overlying phase 1 house [GP 70]. Gillam type 105, A.D. 80–120.
2. (Fig. 9.9) Four rim and seven body sherds including base, from jar with sharply everted rim and shallow groove on the exterior. Sandy, orange fabric with black inclusions. Provenance as 1 above [GP 70]. Gillam type 105 ? A.D. 80–120.
3. (Fig. 9.10) Rim and base fragments from jar with sharply everted rim, with shallow groove below rim on interior. Gritty, dark grey fabric. Provenance as 1 above [GP 70]. Gillam type 105 ? A.D. 80–120.
4. (Fig. 9.11) Rim fragment from cooking pot in BB1 or close imitation. Provenance as 1 above [GP 70]. Early-mid second century.
5. (Fig. 9.12) Rim fragment from cooking pot in light grey fabric imitating BB1 form. Old land surface south of house 1 sealed by the building of house 4 [GP 84].
6. One wall fragment BB1 cooking pot with cross-hatching and base fragment of imitation BB1 cooking pot in sandy, medium grey fabric. From occupation earth of phase 1 house, sealed by house 3 [GP 82]. Type of cross-hatching makes early-mid second century date likely.
7. Three wall sherds, one with shallow horizontal groove, and a base fragment of BB1 cooking pots. Provenance as 1 above [GP 70].
8. (Fig. 9.13) Rim fragment from small jar with slightly everted rim in rough, sandy, brown fabric. From amongst tumble of wall of house 3 [GP 44].

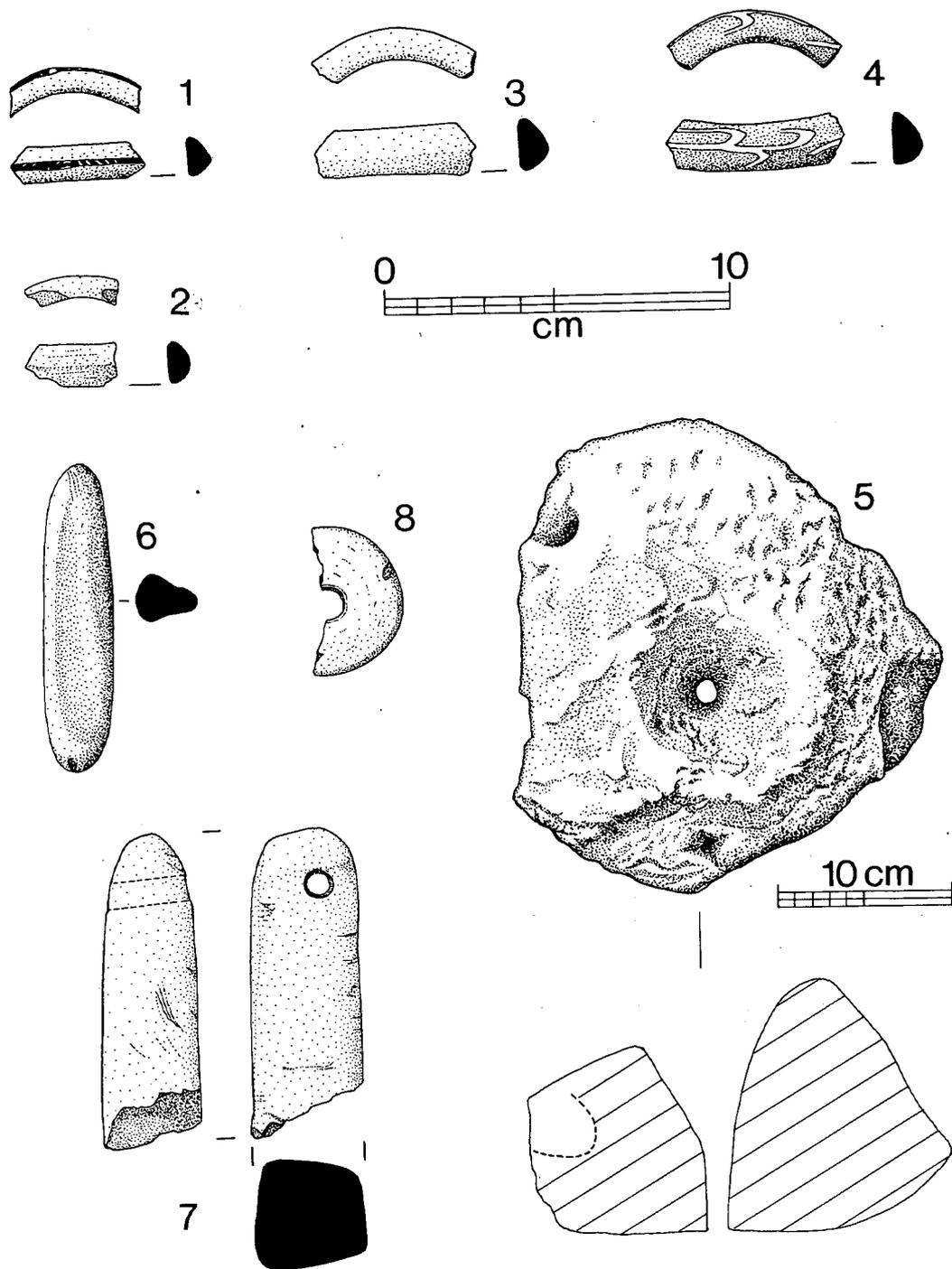


Fig. 10. Glass and stone, 1-4 ($\frac{1}{2}$), 6-8 ($\frac{1}{2}$), 5 ($\frac{1}{4}$).

9. (Fig. 9.14) Rim fragment from cooking pot in BB1. Found with base of a stem-footed vessel in smooth orange fabric (not illustrated) on floor of house 4 sealed by wall tumble [GP 42].
10. Two fragments of gritty, orange-coloured ware and wall sherd of BB1 cooking pot from tumble of wall of house 4 [GP 55].
11. One sherd of thin-walled vessel in dark grey fabric, one base fragment in very coarse grey-black fabric, one fragment of medium-grey ware, and three sherds of pinkish-buff amphora. From floor of house 4 sealed by wall tumble [GP 38].
12. Wall sherd of BB1 cooking pot with cross-hatching on exterior. From within the rubble core of wall of house 4 [GP 31].
13. Three fragments of grey ware cooking pot. Unstratified, house 4 [GP 37].
14. Two wall fragments of BB1 cooking pot and thirteen sherds of pinkish-buff amphora from floor of house 3, sealed by wall tumble [GP 27].
15. Seventeen fragments including base sherds from a mortarium in sandy, orange fabric with black grits. From leached soil overlying paved floor of house 3 [GP 32].
16. Four wall sherds of jar in rough, gritty, grey ware with pinkish exterior; one sherd of coarse, dark grey ware with pitted surface and one fragment of buff-coloured mortarium. From leached soil above floor of house 5 [GP 59].
17. One sherd of pinkish-buff amphora from occupation material on floor of house 10 [GP 66].

C. Glass

1. (Fig. 10.1) Fragment of clear glass bangle, only slightly opaque, with thin blue and white cable inlay. From under paving of house 3 [GP 79]. Type 2, late first or early second century A.D.
2. (Fig. 10.2) Fragment of opaque white glass bangle. From paving to east of houses 3 and 4 [GP 45]. Type 3A, second century A.D.
3. (Fig. 10.3) Fragment of opaque white glass bangle. From the tumble of the wall of house 5 [GP 57]. Type as above.
4. (Fig. 10.4) Fragment of translucent pale green glass bangle with white curvilinear inlay. From a disturbed area of the wall core of house 5 [GP 53]. Type 3F/G? early-mid second century A.D.
5. Fragment of bluish-green glass from beneath the wall of house 4 [GP 89].
6. Small rounded lump of bluish-green glass from beneath the wall tumble in house 4 [GP 47].
7. Very small fragment of blue glass from floor of house 3 [GP 27].
8. Two fragments of blue tinted glass from beneath tumble of west enclosure wall [GP 13].
9. Cylindrical lump of pale green glass, 15 mm diameter and 23 mm long, widening slightly towards one end. From disturbed area of the west wall of the "longhouse" [GP 12].

D. Stone

1. (Fig. 10.5) Damaged top-stone of sandstone rotary quern with peck-marked surface. From tumble of house 4 wall, possibly re-used as building material [GP 91].
2. Broken topstone of sandstone rotary quern, from rubble covering the floor of house 5 [GP 92].
3. Two broken topstones of sandstone rotary querns, from the tumble of the walls of houses 3 and 4 [GP 93].
4. Pivot stone of local limestone, with peck-marked cup 60 mm in diameter on the upper surface. Set into floor of house 4 and probably re-used as paving [GP 94].
5. (Fig. 10.6) Small whetstone used on one surface only. From beneath paved floor of house 4 [GP 80].
6. (Fig. 10.7) Broken, oblong whetstone, pierced at one end for suspension. From the tumble of the west wall of the "longhouse", though in an area of disturbance caused by the insertion of the "keb house" [GP 10]. This, and no. 5 above, were both of local whinstone.
7. (Fig. 10.8) Half a stone spindle whorl, from the top of the rubble core of the wall of house 5 [GP 60].
8. A number of spalls of flint were recovered from the subsoil and rock surfaces near the "longhouse", but although several of these showed signs of working, none were implements.

E. Metal

1. (Fig. 11.1) Two fragments of ? worn bootsole with shallow groove in the centre of one side, and the remains of nails *in situ*. From tumbled stone in the entrance to house 5 [GP 28].
2. (Fig. 11.2) "T"-shaped iron rod, square in section, from beneath the paved floor of house 4 [GP 77].
3. (Fig. 11.3) Fragment of boot-heel plate, from amongst the tumble of the north wall of the "longhouse" [GP 17].
4. (Fig. 11.4) Fragment of iron blade, from beneath rubble in the interior of house 5. Because of disturbance caused by the insertion of the later "keb house", the association of this with the wall tumble of house 5 is doubtful [GP 50].
5. (Fig. 11.5) Bent iron holdfast or linchpin. Provenance as 4 above.
6. (Fig. 11.6) Square-sectioned iron rod with hooked end. Provenance as 4 above.
7. (Fig. 11.7) Wedge-shaped iron blade with rounded end, from brown humus overlying the floor of the "keb house" in house 5 [GP 48].
8. Fragment of lead from beneath the wall of house 4 [GP 75].

F. Bone

No more than flecks of bone, too small for identification, were recovered from the

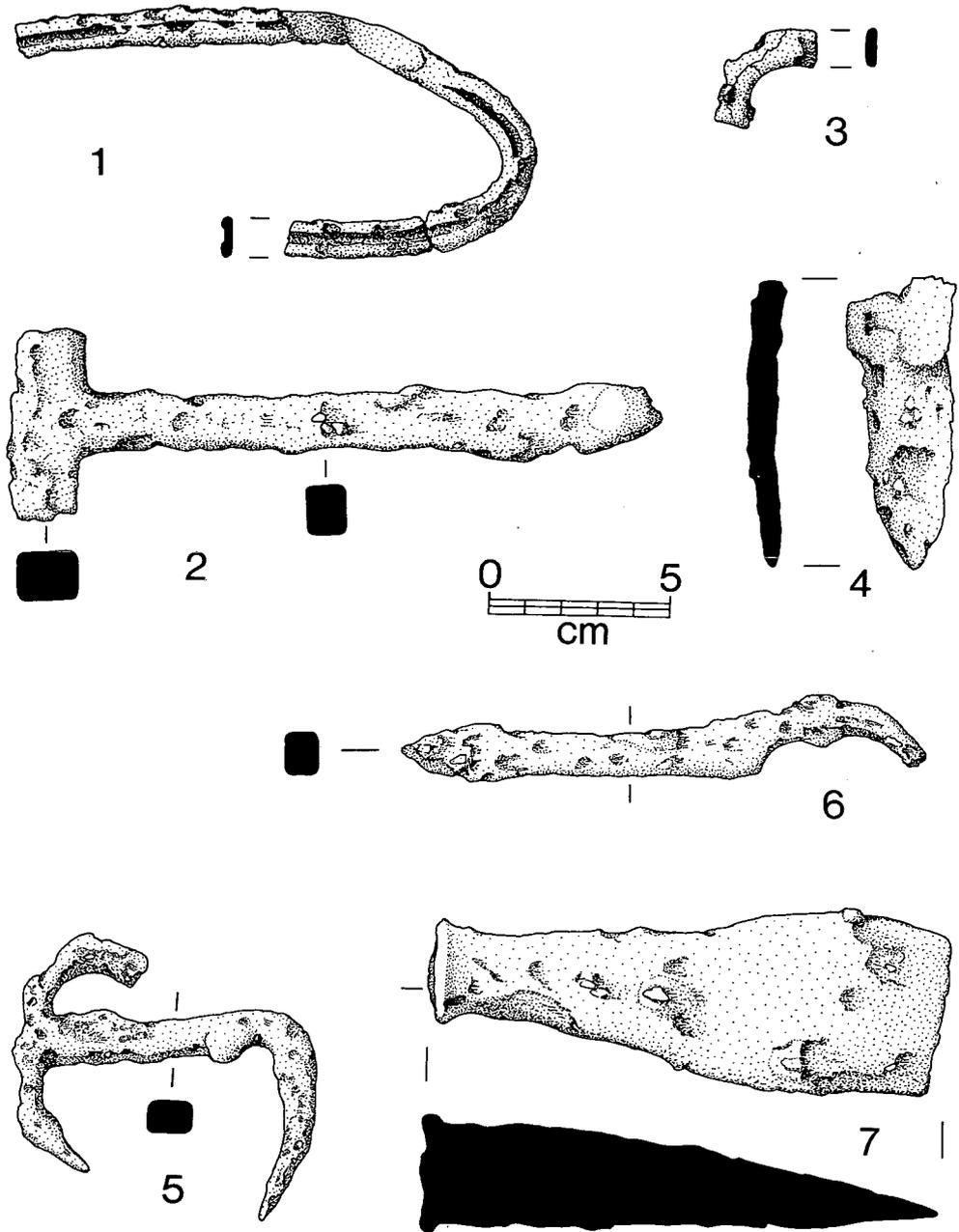


Fig. 11. ($\frac{1}{2}$) Iron.

excavation, and these occurred mainly in the occupation earth associated with the phase 1 house.

SUMMARY

The earliest monument in this area of Gunnar Crag was a partly robbed small cairn which had contained two urned cremations which can probably be dated to the first half of the second millennium B.C. (e.g. Burgess, 1980).

The stone-built, rectangular enclosure of the Roman period had no timber-built predecessor such as has been found on a number of similar Romano-British settlements further north in North Tynedale (e.g. Jobey, 1973, 1977, 1978). Nor was there any evidence to suggest an occupation before the Roman period. However, some sequence may be seen in the development of the site from the late first or early second century A.D. The earliest, comparatively large round house in the interior, of which only the stone founding remained, could have been occupied in the late first or early second century A.D. and replaced by smaller stone-built round houses by the mid-second century A.D. Only three of the visible houses were excavated and the datable material allowed no distinction in date to be made between them. None contained material later than the later second century in date. If the normal plan of similar Romano-British sites in the area had been followed originally, in which the front or eastern part of the site was given over to two yards, it is possible that at least three houses (fig. 2, houses 5, 6 and 7) could be indicative of an increase in the number of houses within the enclosure. However, it must be remembered that the extremely broken nature of the ground within the enclosure may have dictated that these houses were built where they were, rather than to the rear of the settlement. Unfortunately, preliminary excavation of houses 6 and 7 revealed them to be almost totally robbed out and no complete plans or artefacts resulted from these investigations. Further expansion of the settlement would seem to be the logical explanation for the five houses lying outside the enclosure, comparable with what may be observed on some other Romano-British settlements in the county (Jobey, 1974). Unfortunately, the datable material from the excavation of three of these was limited to one sherd of Roman pottery from one house, and this was essentially undatable within the present context. If all the houses had been occupied at the same time, the total number in the settlement would have been ten. There is no significant difference in the date of the Roman finds from this site and of those recovered from the previous excavations on West Gunnar Peak, so that the whole complex could eventually have amounted to at least sixteen houses.

The datable Roman material from Middle Gunnar Peak does not extend beyond the second century when this might have been more generally available. It might be unwise, therefore, to assume that the settlement was abandoned by the third century A.D., particularly as the native pottery is not conducive to close dating. The only native settlement in this area that has produced a number of sherds of third and fourth century dates is that at Huckhoe (Jobey, 1959), though third and fourth century material occurs from further north, notably at Traprain Law, East Lothian.

Little can be said about the economy of the settlement. Arable cultivation may be inferred from the broken rotary querns, and could possibly have taken place on the attractive southern tail of the crags, but all traces would have been removed by the later rig and furrow. Animal husbandry may be implied from the presence of interior yards attached to the houses here and at West Gunnar Peak, and quantities of bones of ox, sheep, pig and goat from the "midden" and elsewhere on West Gunnar Peak.

A long, rectangular building was constructed in more recent times against the west wall of the settlement enclosure, doubtless using material robbed from the latter. Although its dimensions resembled medieval and later houses excavated recently in upper North Tynedale (e.g. Harbottle, 1977), in this instance no dating evidence was obtained, nor can any documentary evidence be found as to its possible context. The absence of any internal domestic provisions could deny its use as a dwelling. Large areas of rig and furrow ploughing and associated field systems were recorded on a 1:2500 survey made of the whole crag as far as East Gunnar Peak, and these occupied most of the areas favourable for cultivation on the tail of the crags. However, with the close proximity of Barrasford and Gunnerton, and the apparently medieval settlement that overlies the Romano-British site at East Gunnar Peak, this may not be definitely associated with activity in the rectangular stone-built structures that survive at West or Mid Gunnar Peak.

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