

NOTES ON ANCIENT FOUNDATIONS

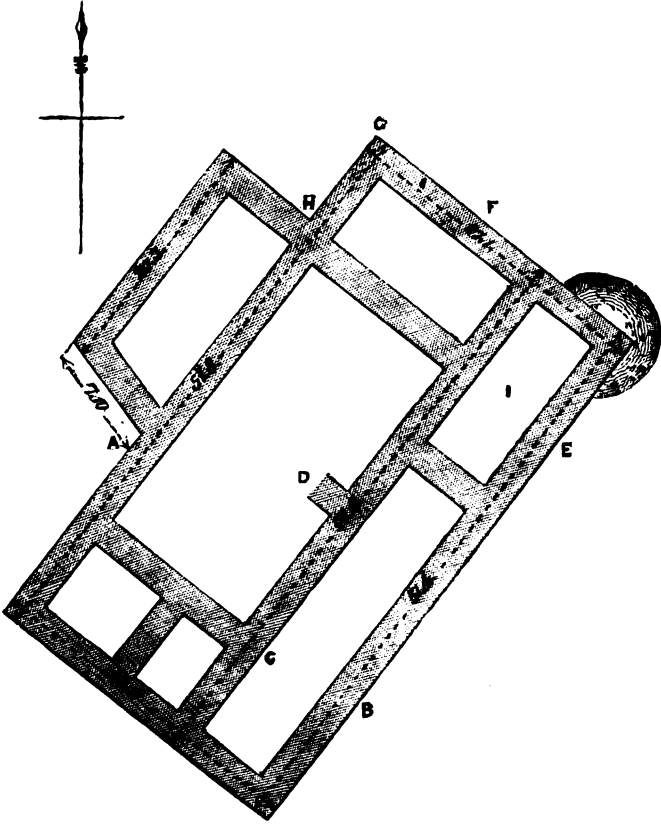
IN THE PARISH OF ELLESBOROUGH.

On the 21st of September, 1858, in taking out some rough flint, which obstructed the plough, we came upon what had evidently been, or was intended to have been, the foundation of some building. This foundation was composed of pure flint, without there being the slightest trace of any mortar, cement, or even earth of any description used in its construction.

The land here lies in high ridges, and it was in lowering one of them that we touched upon these flints just in the highest part of it; the flints were lying about six or eight inches below the surface; on the sides of the ridge, and in, and near the furrow, the plough must have turned many of them up when the land was first ploughed.

This foundation spread over and enclosed an area (as may be seen from the annexed plan) of about 1600 square feet; the outer and interior walls altogether were about 290 feet long; they were from two to five feet deep, measuring from the surface of the ground; and two and a half feet wide generally, in some places a little more. The angles were none of them quite uniform, nor were the walls quite straight lines, but diverging six or eight inches in the long lines.

We commenced operations, as marked in the plan at A, and worked round to B, C, and so on until we had finished at A. In the whole of the walls, included in H, A, B and C, the flints were placed very loosely in, and we found no trace of any building, and it appeared very doubtful to me whether any building had been placed upon them. If there had, it must have been of a very light nature, as the flints seemed to have been thrown loosely in, and came out with very little labour, and were not more than from two to three feet deep. But after we had got to B and C, we found the flints had been laid in more carefully, and had been pressed very closely together, as if some heavy building had been placed upon them, and we found considerable difficulty in getting them



ANCIENT FOUNDATIONS DISCOVERED AT TERRICK.

out with the pickaxe. I did not notice whether or not there was any parting in the outside wall at B, but the interior wall at C became suddenly from two and a half to five feet deep, and there was a marked difference also in the depth of the foundation at the corner H, as if this part of the building, included in H, A, B and C, had been added on after the other was built. The whole of the foundations, as marked in the plan from B, C, through E, F, G, and to H, were from three to five feet deep, the corners being the deepest, and laid with large flint at the bottom; the short piece at D, which seemed to be put for a buttress to the wall, and the bottom of the wall thereabout, were laid with flint from one to nearly three feet long, and wide and thick in proportion.

In and about the space marked I, we found a quantity of mortar, some of it half an inch thick, made of very loose material, principally sand, and faced with a very thin coat of cement or stucco, and coloured a bright red, as if a room of some elegance had been built here. This mortar was mixed up with the soil, some of it to the depth of a foot; there were also traces of mortar all along this side of the building from E to G.

It did not appear that any of the earth had been disturbed on the sides of the foundation until we reached E, but about six or seven feet from the corner at E we found on the outside of the exterior wall what had evidently been a receptacle for refuse, or a cesspool, which came close up to the foundation, and extended eight or nine feet round the corner at F, coming close up to the foundation also here, and being six or seven feet wide on this side, but not so wide on the other. This cesspool, or whatever it was, contained bones of different animals in considerable numbers; we noticed those of the cow, horse, sheep, swine, and goose, or some such large fowl, the bony parts of some sheeps' horns, a boar's tusk, oyster shells very much decomposed, shells of the small common snail, (which mouldered on being moved) a few pieces of Roman tiles, and a great many pieces of broken pottery, of which we noticed thirty different patterns—two pieces rather large, as may be seen from the sketch annexed,* for which, together with the plan of the foundation, I am indebted to the pencil of the Rev. G. G. Ross, late curate of Ellesbo-

* See page 56.

rough. The soil of the cesspool, or refuse hole, consisted of ashes, apparently of wood, wood charcoal, and a very black mould.

This cesspool must have been filled up very gradually, and the bones, pottery, &c., first thrown into it when it contained fluid; for one piece of pottery, No. 1 in the sketch, which was lying on its side, with the mouth of it inclined a little downwards, was completely filled with soil that must have got into it when in a very soft state, and have gradually hardened so as to resist the pressure from above; for although there were three and a half feet of soil above it, it was not crushed out of shape, although cracked in several places. The piece No. 2 as sketched, appeared to have sediment in it like ashes and sand. The small piece, No. 3, when first taken out was of a bright yellow, but it has since turned black. The bones were all detached, and lying in various directions, not like animals that had been buried.

The earth had evidently been moved on both sides of the foundation from E to G, as we found bones and pieces of pottery at intervals all along both sides of these walls nearly as low down as the bottom of the foundation, but in very small pieces, so that some of this pottery might have been there, and I have little doubt was there, before these foundations were laid. I cannot help thinking however, that the refuse hole or cesspool, or whatever it was, and the pottery, &c., found therein, had been made use of by the people who inhabited the buildings placed upon these foundations, because there could be no mistaking the nature of the soil this refuse hole contained, which, as before stated, came close up to the foundation, and extended quite round the corner. If it had been there before, and had been circular, as most likely it would have been, the same kind of soil would have been found inside the wall as was found outside in the refuse hole, but I did not observe any. The pieces of pottery found at intervals along the wall appeared to be rougher and more rotten than those found in the cesspool.

We found no particle of metal whatever with the exception of two small bronze coins, evidently Roman, one on the foundation, and the other a short distance off. I may mention also that several Roman coins have been picked up in this field by the labourers at different times.

The field in which these ancient remains were discovered has always been known by the name of King's Field, and is situate at Terrick, in the parish of Ellesborough, in the County of Bucks, on the estate of Lady Frankland Russell, on the north side of the high road leading from Stoke Mandeville to Chequer's Court, and on the north side of, and near to Terrick-turnpike Gate.

JOHN S. STONE.

Terrick House, Dec. 18, 1858.

