

I.

FORTS ON WHITCASTLE HILL, UPPER TEVIOTDALE; AND EARTHWORK ON FLANDERS MOSS, MENTEITH. BY DR D. CHRISTISON, VICE-PRESIDENT.

I. FORTS ON WHITCASTLE HILL.

In Upper Teviotdale, 4 miles W.S.W. of Hawick, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile N.E. of Easter Branxholm Loch, and 2 miles west of the junction of the Borthwick Water with the Teviot, stands this remarkable group of apparent earthworks. The former stream flows past 1 mile to the north, and the latter $1\frac{1}{2}$ to the south, and the country between may be described as a ridgy tableland rising 400 to 500 feet above the streams, and about twice as much above the sea. The same character of the land, indeed, continues for a great distance, peaks such as the Eildons, Rubers Law, and ranges like the Cheviots, rising far off on the horizon like islands from a sea.

On the summit and at the east end of one of the little ridges of this tableland, 993 feet above the sea, commanding a most extensive view, the group is situated, and according to the large-scale Ordnance map the position is known as Whitcastle Hill, the name being printed close to the group, as if derived from it.

I had seen these works in a brief visit long ago, but, their fine preservation having recently attracted the attention of Miss Watson of Hassendeanburn, I was invited to go to them again last July, and, after a preliminary inspection, it was arranged by her that we should return with Mr Thomas Ross, and allow sufficient time for him to survey the group. The result is the plan (fig. 1), by help of which, with the sections, I trust that my description will be easily followed.

The group consists of five separate works, placed somewhat in two divisions, one of them with a rectangular and two curvilinear enclosures,

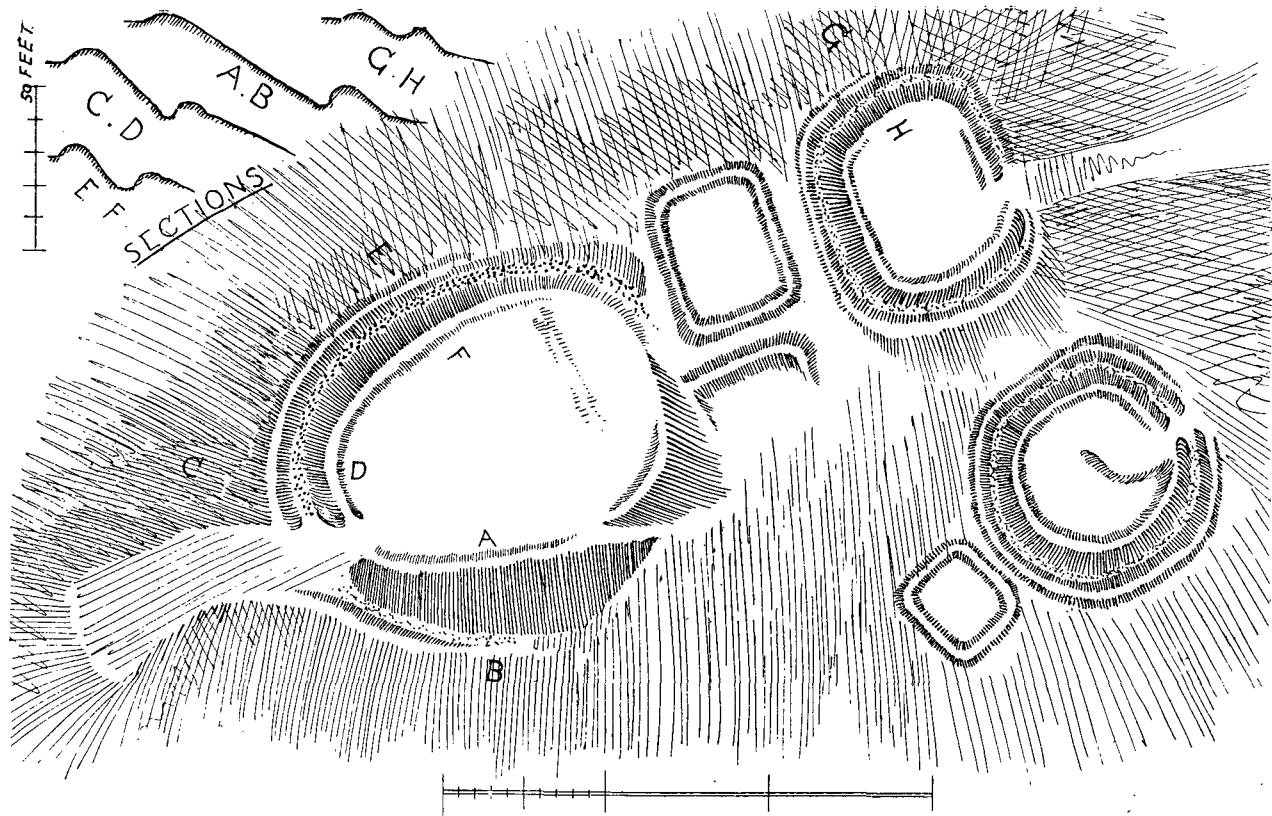


Fig. 1. Ground Plan of Earthworks on Whitcastle Hill.

the other with one of each kind. In each of these divisions the enclosures are close to each other without intercommunicating, and the two divisions are only about 40 feet apart at their nearest point.

First Division.

The main fort surrounds the nearly level summit of the ridge, and in form is a true oval, the east being much broader than the west end. At the ends and on the north side the ground falls away from the defences gently, but the slopes from the south side and south-west corner are pretty abrupt, and give considerable natural strength. The fortification has been effected by scarping these natural slopes, digging a trench all round at the foot, the spoil being thrown outwards to form an outer mound, and partly, perhaps, to make a rampart or parapet at the top. At the east end the defences are much damaged, but elsewhere they are well preserved.

Dimensions.—Over all, the length is about 270 feet and the breadth 250. Measuring from crest to crest of the rampart, the length of the interior is 205 feet, and the width, at the middle of the oval, 150 feet. In its present state the rampart is merely a slight mound a foot or two in height, merging too gradually inwards to be measured in width. The scarp is steep and high on the south side, and also on the north except that there it diminishes towards the ends, particularly at the east, where the slope of the ground is so gentle that the scarp must have depended on extra depth of the trench for its height; but here the rampart and trench are nearly levelled. From the nature of the ground, the trench varies much in depth and width, and to the south, in its present state, it almost becomes a terrace. The profiles (fig. 1) show that the perpendicular height of the scarp is above 20 feet at one point, and 12 to 13 at two others, and that the outer mound is comparatively trifling, rising only from 2 to 6 feet above the foot of the trench, even where well preserved.

The entrance is at the west end, and is no less than 27 feet wide where it emerges from the area, increasing to 40 feet when it passes the

trench, neither does it appear to have suffered change from the original plan. Preserving this width, there is a flattening of the descending ridge, ending in a level expansion 60 to 70 feet wide, which, viewed from the fort, has all the aspect of a traverse, though it loses much of this character on a closer inspection.

A roadway or path slants up from the east and enters the fort near the middle of the south side, but it may not be original.

The oblong outwork lies 120 feet E.N.E. from the main fort, upon the northern, gently-sloping side of the descending ridge. Hence its interior surface is not level, but inclines slightly to the north and east. Its form is oblong, with rounded ends and sides so slightly curved as to be nearly straight; and the long axis is directed towards the north. The dimensions over all are 180 by 135 feet, and interiorly, from crest to crest of the rampart, 105 by 80 feet. The fortifications, well preserved except to the east, consist of two ramparts with an intervening trench, and are wider and stronger on the south and west than on the north and south; probably because on the latter sides the ground falls away and renders them more strong by nature.

On the north side (Profile CD, fig. 1) the rampart is 6 feet 6 inches high, and the outer mound rises only 2 feet above the trench; the top of this mound is flat, and 2 to 3 feet wide; towards the interior the rampart is quite low. On the south side the rampart is 5 feet high on the inside, and 7 feet high above the trench; and the outer mound is even higher. The entrance is on the east side, near the south-east angle, and, though only 6 feet wide at present, was probably even less originally. A path or roadway runs a short distance eastward from it.

The rectangular enclosure is wedged in between the main fort and the oblong work. It is separated from the latter by a passage about 15 feet wide, but is connected with the damaged fortifications of the main fort at its east end. A single mound, 3 to 5 feet high, with slightly rounded angles, encloses a level area of 85 by 70 feet, from crest to crest. There is no trench. The long axis is parallel with that of the oblong work.

Separated from the south side of the rectangle, and parallel with it, a mound, 70 feet long, encroaching at its west end deeply into the ruined fortifications of the main fort, turns by a right angle at its east end, and runs southward for a short distance. This may be the remains of another rectangular enclosure. Within the main fort, and about 40 feet from its east end, another straight mound in a rather fragmentary condition runs across the interior. For about 70 feet it is fairly continuous, and if complete would be 130 feet long.

Second Division.

Circular Outwork.—This is situated about 150 feet east of the main fort and 40 feet south-east of the oblong work ; or, reckoning from their inner ramparts, 220 and 100 feet respectively. It is commanded by the main fort, but, short as the distance is from the oblong work, the one is barely visible from the other, owing to their being on opposite sides of the ridge. The shape is irregularly circular, the north-west side being nearly straight. The diameter over all is 150 feet, and internally, from crest to crest, 95 feet. The defences closely resemble those of the oblong outwork, and need not be separately described. The entrance is towards the north-east, and is 5 or 6 feet wide.

Rectangular Enclosure.—Almost in contact with the last on its south-west side is a small rectangle enclosed by a mound, but without a trench. It measures about 67 by 60 feet over all, and 55 by 50 from crest to crest of the mound, which is 3 to 5 feet high.

Remarks.

All the structures have the appearance of being earthworks, and I noticed very few stones on the ground, except those forming a small cairn at the top. But "Whitcastle," the name of the hill, suggests that the main fort, at least, may have been really a stone fort, just as we find "White" applied in the case of "the White Caterthun." A very slight excavation would probably determine this.

The three curvilinear works are evidently of a defensive character,

and there is no reason why they might not be contemporary; although it is very exceptional to find subsidiary works detached, and particularly so far detached from the main fort, as here. Indeed, the only other example I can recall of a detached work with a trench is not very far off, and in the same county, at Bonchester.

But the rectilinear works, with their slight proportions and want of trenches, seem to have been intended for indefensible enclosures, though for what precise purpose does not appear. The absence of entrances would seem to disqualify them from being cattle kraals; and even if cattle were got into them, the enclosing mounds do not seem sufficient to keep them there. Possibly they, and the straight mound near the east end of the interior of the main fort, may have had to do with the gardens or cultivated enclosures of a croft or summer shieling, which may have existed here in comparatively recent times. Certain it is that the rectangles were posterior in date to the main fort, as the principal one, and the fragment probably of another, encroach on the end of the fort and stand upon the ruins of its rampart and trench.

"The Clints" Fort.

Upwards of 500 yards south-east of the group a fort is marked on the Ordnance map close to the public road, and "The Clints" is printed close to it.¹ It is about 180 feet lower than the group, or 820 feet above the sea. I saw it on my first visit, but have no note of its condition. On the Ordnance map it is drawn as a circle about 90 feet in diameter, with a simple mound remaining to the north, while the south half is represented by a dotted line, as if barely traceable, with a deep intake to the south-west.

II. EARTHWORK ON FLANDERS MOSS, MENTEITH.

In Menteith and the Lennox primitive fortresses of any kind are so rare that a peculiar interest attaches to this example (fig. 2). It is situ-

¹ In Jameson's *Scottish Dictionary*, "Clint" is defined as (1) a hard or flinty rock (South of Scotland, Lothians); (2) any pretty large stone of a hard kind (South of Scotland): "Clints," limited to the shelves of a river (Clydesdale).

ated 2 miles east of the south-east corner of the Lake of Menteith, and half a mile east by north of Ballingrove farmhouse, close to the west side

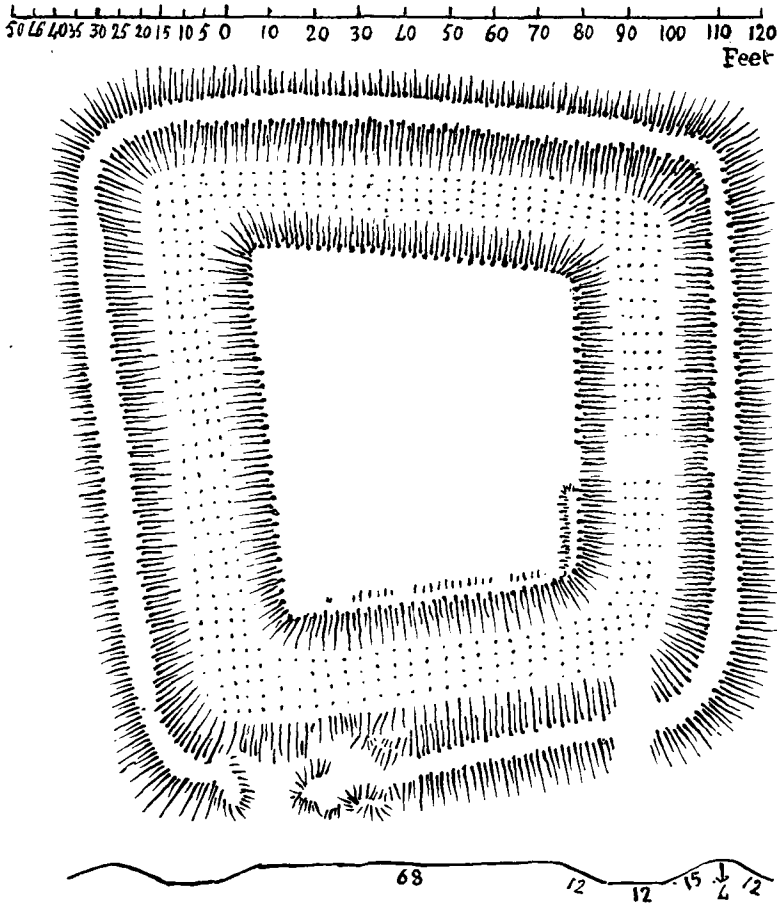


Fig. 2. Ground Plan of Earthwork in Flander Moss.

of the Flanders Moss, a great level bog about 2 miles square. The work stands on the bog, but very near the firm ground to the north-east, as

if the builders desired to have the protection of the bog, and at the same time to have a not too difficult access to the "redoubt." Although of low profile, it is conspicuous from its green colour, in contrast with the grey and brown of the bog.

The figure is quadrangular, but no one angle is a right one, as the sides have all different lengths, measuring along the top of the rampart 65, 67, 72, and 83 feet respectively. The slope of the scarp is about 12 feet long, and that of the counterscarp 14 feet; the trench is 12 feet wide, and 3 to 4 feet deep down to the present flat, boggy surface, but it was probably deeper when originally dug out.

The interior is level, and has no trace of a rampart on the north and west sides; but on the east a slight but well-preserved one runs northwards from the south-east angle for about 20 feet, and there are distinct enough remains of another along the south side.

The entrance has apparently been through the south-east angle of the outer mound, and so northward along the trench, flanked by the 20-foot rampart; but now the trench can be passed dry-shod only at a single point opposite the north end of the 20-foot rampart.

The dimensions over all are about 160 feet each way, and of the interior 75 by 70 feet. The origin of this work is obscure, but it is more probably late mediæval, or even post-Reformation, in date, than prehistoric.