

## I.

ACCOUNT OF SOME SLIGHT EXCAVATIONS AT THE MOTE OF  
HAWICK. BY ALEXANDER O. CURLE, DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM.

This mote is a conspicuous object on the right side of the railway as one passes out of Hawick. Its situation is on the point of a spur of land which projects out from the higher ground to the westward, and forms the extremity of the watershed between the Teviot and its tributary, the Slitrig. Below it on the haughland above the rivers cluster the houses and mills of the thriving Border burgh, while on rising ground nearer to the mote stands the parish church, itself occupying an ancient site. The field on the lower end of which the mote stands slopes towards the north-east and also to a certain extent laterally from the mote towards the south-east. The mote, in the usual form of a truncated cone, rises steeply from ground level to a height of 28 feet 7 inches on its highest aspect, of 23 feet 7 inches on its lowest, and appears to be entirely artificial in its formation. The summit, which is a circular plat, has a diameter of 41 feet.

Believing that I could discern at several points indications of a trench or ditch around the base, I approached the Town Council with a request that they should cut some sections inwards towards the hillock, and ascertain if my surmise was a correct one. In this they kindly obliged me, and on 6th April 1912 I visited Hawick to inspect the result of the digging done on the previous day. Three very narrow trenches had been dug, one on the higher side towards the south-west, another towards the south-south-east, and a third on the lower ground towards the north-east. A little additional digging revealed the presence of the ditch in each excavation. On the upper or south-west side, it indicated at the surface a breadth of 28 feet 6 inches, and revealed a greatest depth of 7 feet. It had been entirely filled up with soil, and as a portion of a modern glass bottle, and the



Fig. 1. Mote of Hawick, from the South-West.

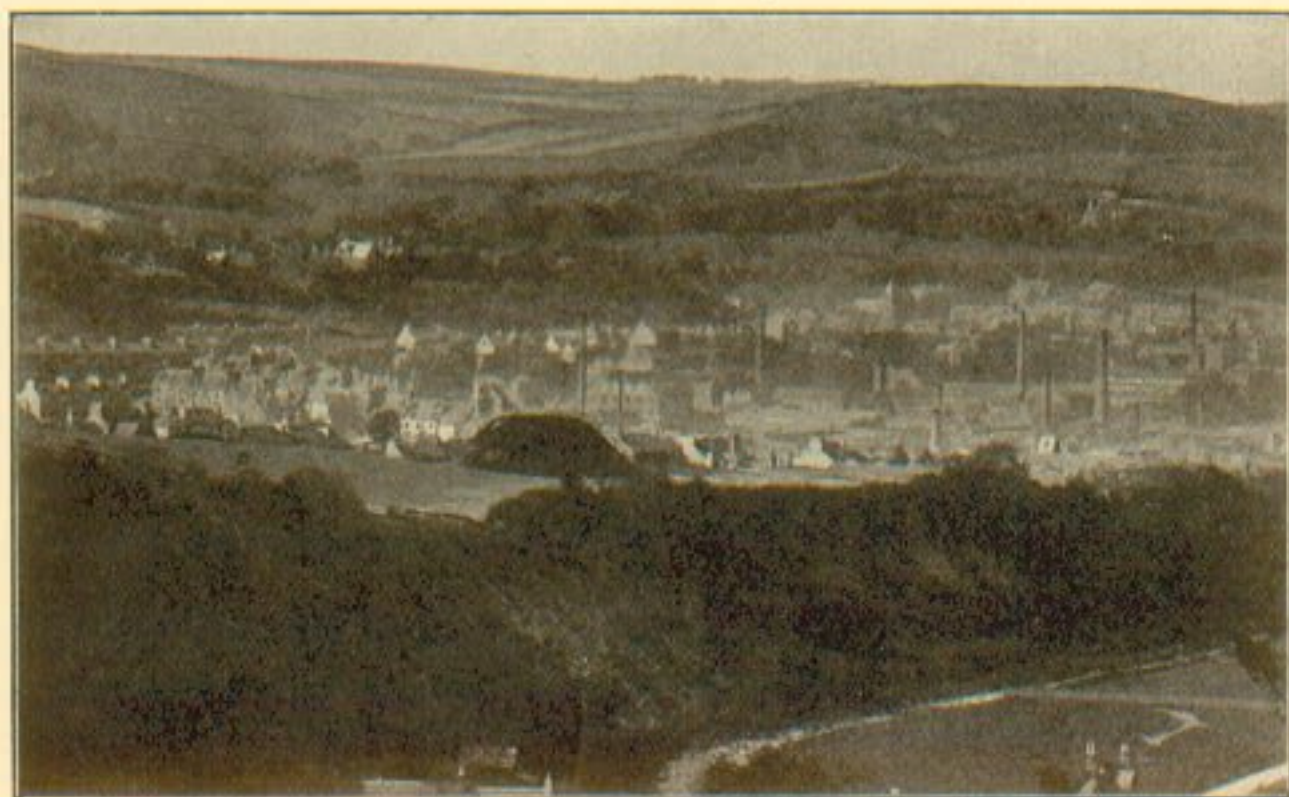


Fig. 2. Mote of Hawick, view from the South-South-East.

head of a clay pipe, came from the filling at a depth of some 4 feet below the present surface, it was evident that at this point at any rate, the refilling had taken place in comparatively recent times, though all knowledge of the previous existence of the ditch appears to have been lost. The second section made on the south-south-east side was only 14 feet wide and 4 feet in depth at the centre, while the third section revealed measurements similar to the last. The ditch appeared to be flat-bottomed, and from the difference in depth on the higher and lower sides it is evident that the mote had been constructed on a level platform cut out of the sloping ground. The third section, that on the lower side, differed markedly from both the others in that it contained kitchen-midden refuse, consisting of animal bones, some of them split for extraction of the marrow, and numerous fragments of pottery. The discovery of the bones of a horse and of an iron horse-shoe, coupled with the fact that pottery of an early date came to light at this spot at a high level, seemed to point to the disturbance of the deposit by the burial of a horse in the trench at some date subsequent to the occupation of the mote, but, to judge from the condition of the bones, that date was not a recent one. As a relic bed had been located, I widened the original exploratory trench and made a transverse cut westward along the ditch for a distance of 9 feet, with a breadth of 3 feet 6 inches. In this extension the relics appeared all to lie in a deposit covering the bottom of the ditch to a depth of about 1 foot. Numerous fragments of wheel-made pottery were recovered, representing some thirty-six vessels, for the most part cooking pots of hard, unglazed ware, of a buff or grey tint externally, having on the inner surface shades varying from white to pink, according to the colour of the clay wash, or slip, with which they had been treated. The body is hard and well baked, and from the clay having many small particles of stone in it, the surface is rather rough. The sides are as a rule slightly corrugated, much blackened by fire, and thin, varying in thickness from  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch. The bottoms have been flat and show no signs of thumb-marking or

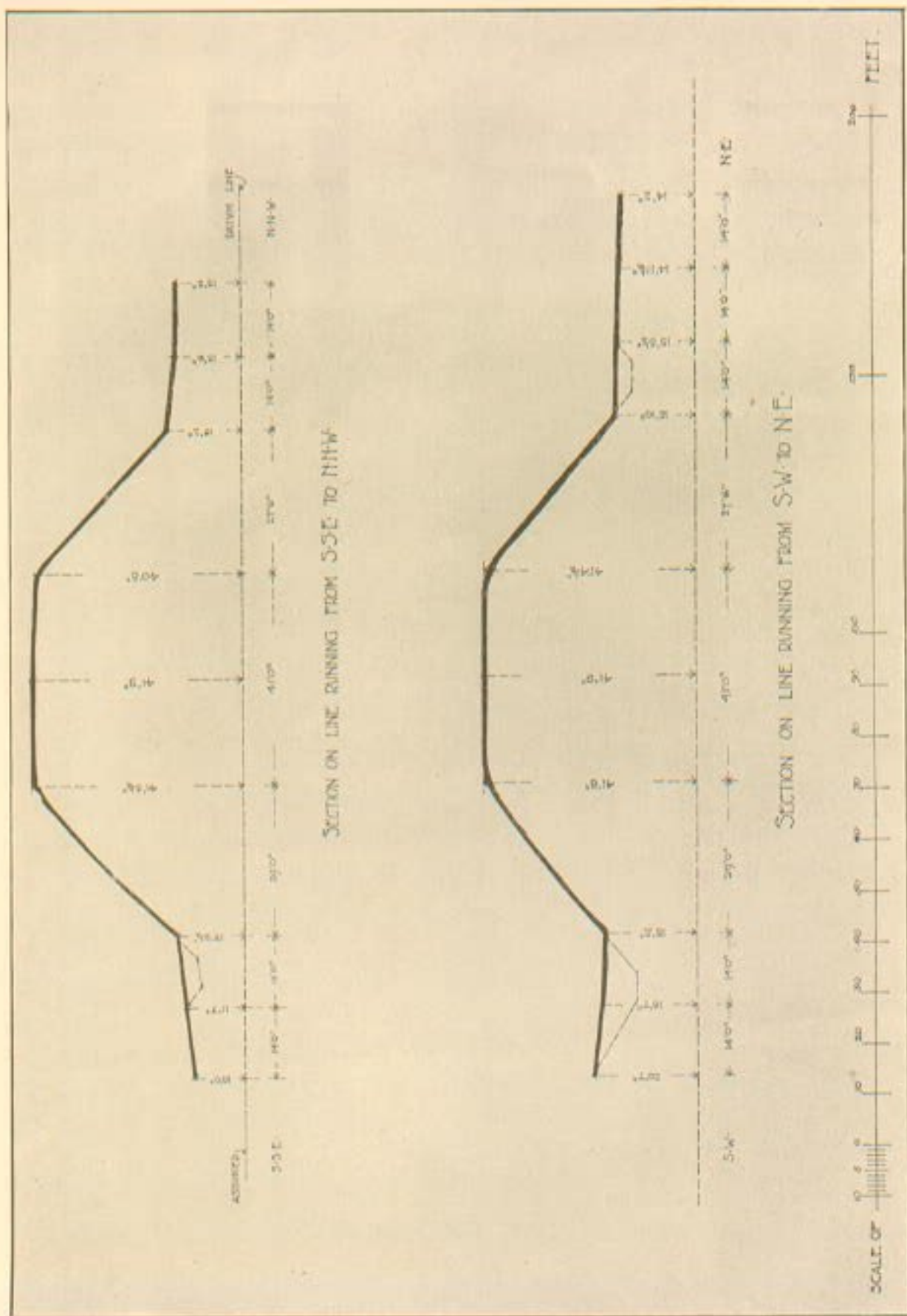


Fig. 3. Mote of Hawick—Sections.

pinching at the edge, as does the pottery of a slightly later period. Two vessels, of which fairly large portions of the rims remain, have an indicated diameter of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches at the mouth. Fig. 4 shows sections of the rims of these cooking pots. Fragments of glazed earthenware were less numerous. A small triangular fragment,

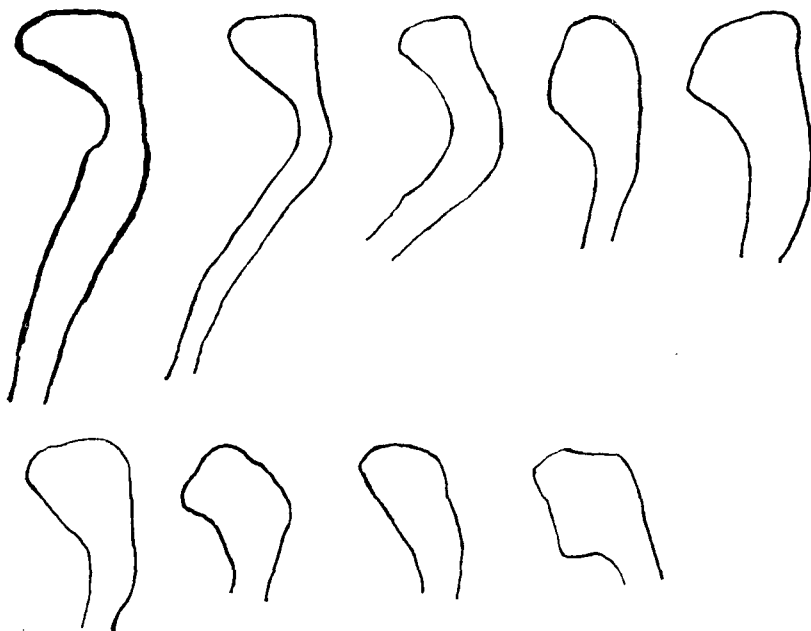


Fig. 4. Sections of Rims of Cooking Pots.

covered with a well-applied brown glaze, is decorated with a series of double incised parallel lines passing around the vessel; one portion of the lip of another pitcher is coated on the exterior with a thick yellow glaze. Both these pieces find analogues at Old Sarum, where a large collection of twelfth- to thirteenth-century pottery has been recovered in the excavation of the Norman castle. The style of

the first of the two pieces above described is represented there by a large brown-handled jar about 13 inches in height, having a greatest diameter of 10 inches, while the yellow ware finds an exact parallel. A shard, brick-red inside, coated externally with a brownish-green glaze, now for the most part weathered off, has been decorated with a wavy applied fillet,  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch broad, encircling it, and beneath, parallel oblique rows of small markings made with the impression of a pointed tool or stick.

A bone needle (fig. 5),  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches in length, rounded at the point, and flat by nature where pierced by the eye, was also recovered, and it likewise finds its exact parallel at Old Sarum.

From the very bottom of the ditch came the most important relic of all—a coin, much decayed, but clearly recognisable as a silver short cross penny of the first issue of Henry II. of England (1154–1189). We thus have here fairly conclusive evidence of an Anglo-Norman occupation of a mote hill, in a twelfth-century English coin, and pottery both glazed and unglazed, identical with that which has been recovered from the ruins of the Norman stone-built stronghold of Old Sarum.

The records show that a Norman family of the name of Lovel of old held the barony of Hawick, and a commission appointed in 1347<sup>1</sup> to inquire into the rights of a certain Richard Lovel thereto, found that the said Richard himself and his ancestors had possessed the barony from time beyond memory. It is possible therefore that we have here the mound which sustained the wooden tower of the first of the family to settle in the district. The



Fig. 5. Bone Needle. †.

<sup>1</sup> Bain's *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, vol. iii. p. 275.

proof, adduced hitherto for the Anglo-Norman origin of our mote hills, has been almost entirely derived from literary sources, but it has been deemed sufficient to establish the hypothesis, and now the incontrovertible fact supplied by relics may be regarded as completing the chain of evidence.

Since these results were obtained at Hawick, an hour's excavation on the ditch of a mound at Cadder in Lanarkshire to which a Roman character had been tentatively applied produced several pieces of glazed earthenware of mediæval manufacture. In conclusion, I would add that there is probably no class of ancient site that lends itself to excavation with so little expenditure as the ditch of a mote hill, and not many which will produce more satisfactory products.

It is to be regretted that the Town Council of Hawick could not see their way to allow the complete excavation of this ditch when the preliminary examination had proved so fruitful, but their decision was no doubt due to a commendable desire that this, the most ancient monument which the town possesses, should not be subjected to the slightest risk of deterioration.

The relics found are preserved in the Museum at Wilton Park, Hawick.

For the use of the photographs illustrating the mote, I am indebted to Mr Robert Nisbet and Mr W. P. Gaylor, Hawick.