

2. EXCAVATIONS AT CASTLE LAW, GLENCORSE, AND AT CRAIG'S QUARRY, DIRLETON, 1948-9.

The purpose of these notes is to record two minor excavations carried out in recent years by members of the Edinburgh University Archæological Society. At Castle Law, Glencorse, the excavation was designed to discover the nature of the rampart construction adjacent to the inner gateway of the fort on the east, which had been partially excavated by Professor V. G. Childe in 1931-2.¹ At Craig's Quarry, the site of what must have been a strongly walled fort with a single line of defence had been almost wholly quarried away before its existence was reported to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland by Dr J. S. Richardson, and rescue excavations were carried out to save what information was possible. Quarrying has continued, and little of the site now remains.

Castle Law, Glencorse (Nat. Grid ref. 36/229638).

This small oval fort lies on the southern slopes of the Pentland Hills, just within the 1000-foot contour. A plan and fuller description of the site will be found in Professor Childe's report cited above. The inner area, some 300 by 150 ft., is surrounded by the remains of a low bank, the eastern of the two opposed entrances through which was partly uncovered by Childe and re-excavated to some extent during the present work; there was no ditch.

Concentrically outside this the fort had additional defences, in the form of double ramparts each with an interior ditch. Childe's excavations had not determined the relationship between the three ramparts, nor was it possible to say whether the innermost rampart defined the earliest fort, to which additional ramparts had been added later. On analogy with other Lowland forts, however, such may well have been the sequence.² A *terminus ad quem* for the life of the fort was provided by the 2nd century A.D. finds from an earth-house built in the obsolete inner ditch.

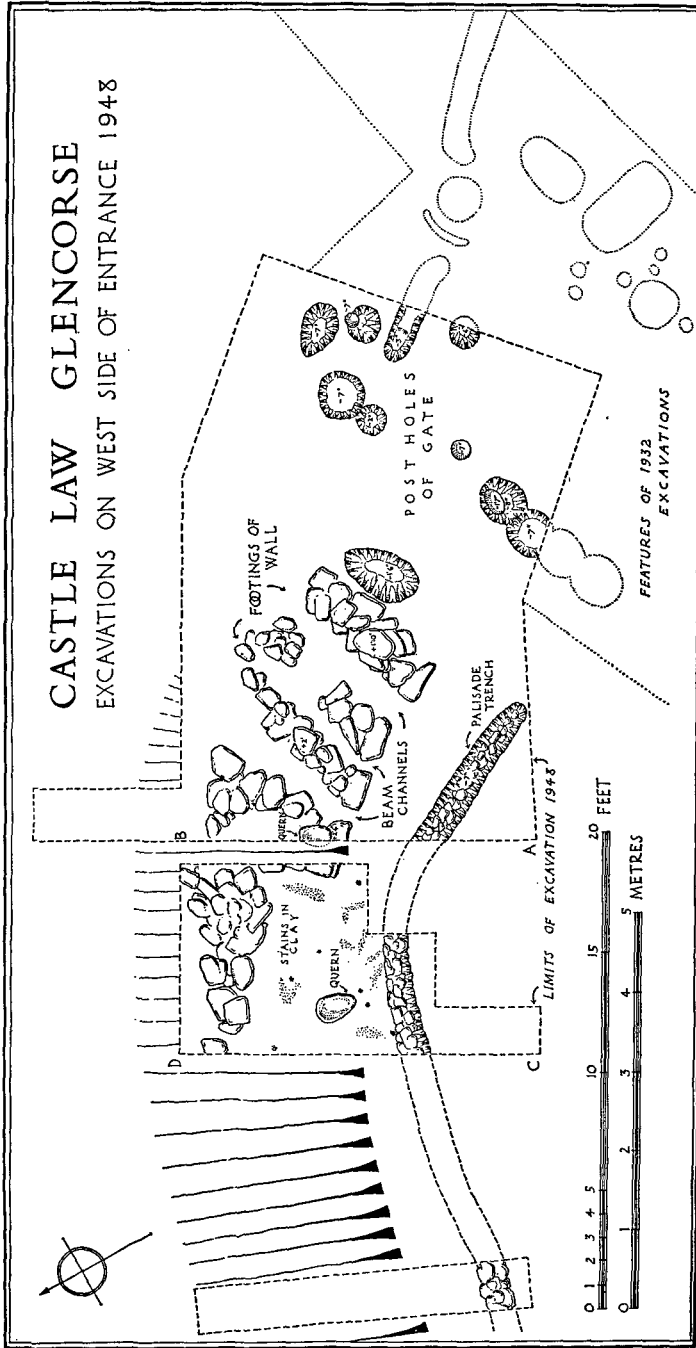
The cutting here described was made through the inner rampart close to the gate planned by Childe in his fig. 3. He discovered a large number of post-holes, amongst which were four large ones which he suggested had originally supported a wooden bridge construction over the gateway of the inner rampart. The purpose of the 1948 excavation was to examine the character of this rampart and to see if any other signs of timber construction remained. In order to do this, it was first necessary partially to re-excavate the areas already examined, and a plan incorporating the sum of the two excavations is shown in fig. 3.

Of the four large gate-posts identified by Childe, only the two most westerly were re-excavated in 1948, and this was done in order to provide a base to which the subsequent excavations could be referred. Five feet to the west of these post-holes was found another larger and deeper hole, somewhat oval in shape, and 1 ft. 6 ins. deep, which marked and may in some way have held a timber upright supporting the rampart structure.

The area excavated in 1948, shown in fig. 3, measured approximately 20 ft. from the end of the rampart at the gate. The rampart itself was stripped down in horizontal levels, and was found to consist of earth and stones to a depth of

¹ P.S.A.S., LXVII (1932-3), 362-88.

² Cf. "Hownam Rings and Bonchester Hill" (P.S.A.S., LXXXII (1947-8), 193-225; *ibid.*, LXXXIV (1949-50), 113-37).



14 ins. Below this, white streaky clay and stones composed the remaining part of the rampart, and careful examination of this revealed the presence of channels, presumably for horizontal timbers, in the lowest course of what must have been a wall (see sections, fig. 4). The wall foundations had been about 7 ft. wide and the timbers a little under 1 ft. in width, laid transversely to the line of the wall at intervals of about 2 ft. 6 ins. from centre to centre of the beams, and packed into position with laid stones, including worn saddle-querns. No trace of actual wood was recovered. Beam-channels for three and possibly four timbers were found.

CASTLE LAW GLENCORSE INNER WALL SECTIONS 1948

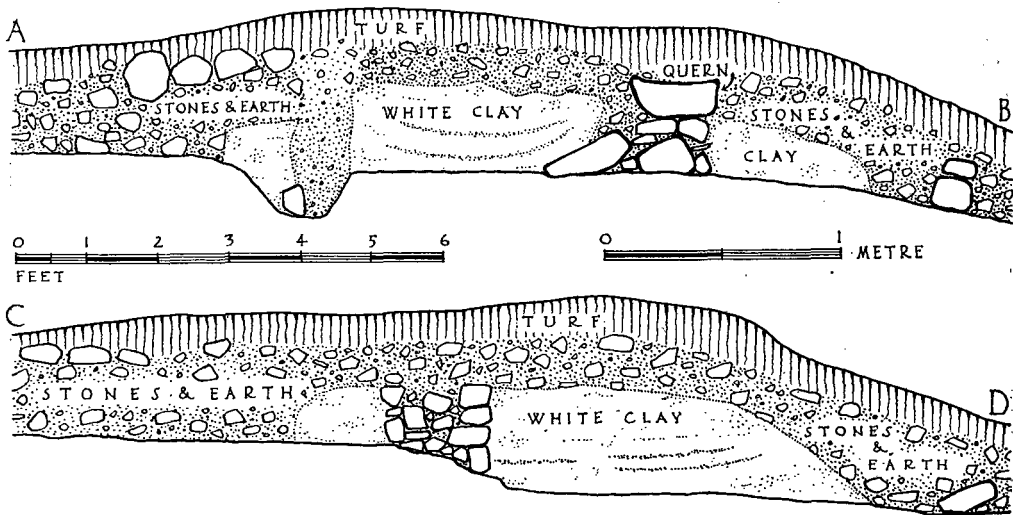


Fig. 4.

Beyond this point the character of the rampart changed; the heavy stonework diminished to form no more than an outer kerb, within which the rampart was wholly composed of white clay. In this clay amorphous horizontal streaks suggested the former presence of brushwood as a component of the rampart make-up, and vertical stains, circular in cross-section and pointed at the base, implied the use of thin stakes an inch or so in diameter holding this material together. Another saddle-quern was found embedded in the top of this clay. This clay must have been brought to the site from elsewhere, and its use suggests a possible comparison with the more sophisticated wall of clay "bricks" in the Hallstatt fort of the Heuneburg near Sigmaringen.¹

The back of the rampart had been defined by a palisade, which at the entrance had been set in a trench 7 ins. in depth and 18 ins. wide below the natural rock. It followed the line of the rampart, its depth in the natural subsoil decreasing, though its packing-stones showed it clearly in the clay mass of the rampart (Section C-D, fig. 4). The indications in Section A-B (fig. 4) suggest that the upright posts of the palisade were approximately 10 ins. in diameter. To these

¹ Dehn in *Ant.* xxvii (1953), 164.

uprights no doubt the horizontal timbers and brushwood of the rampart had been tied, and the palisade would have formed a vertical inner face to the structure.

With the exception of a single sherd of thin light red, hard-textured pottery, and the saddle-querns already mentioned, no artifacts were recovered from the excavations of 1948. The affinities of the fort must therefore depend on the peculiar structure of its wall, which brings it into line with the large series of timber-laced fortifications which in North Britain may be as late as the 1st century B.C. The nearest parallel to the clay and timber construction is at Maiden Castle, Bickerton (Cheshire), probably of the 1st century A.D.¹

Craig's Quarry, Dirleton (Nat. Grid ref. NT/508836).

This fort has largely been quarried away, and only one length of walling remained, on the north side. In order to establish the character, and if possible the date, of this fort, a cutting was made across the wall at a point where it was well preserved.

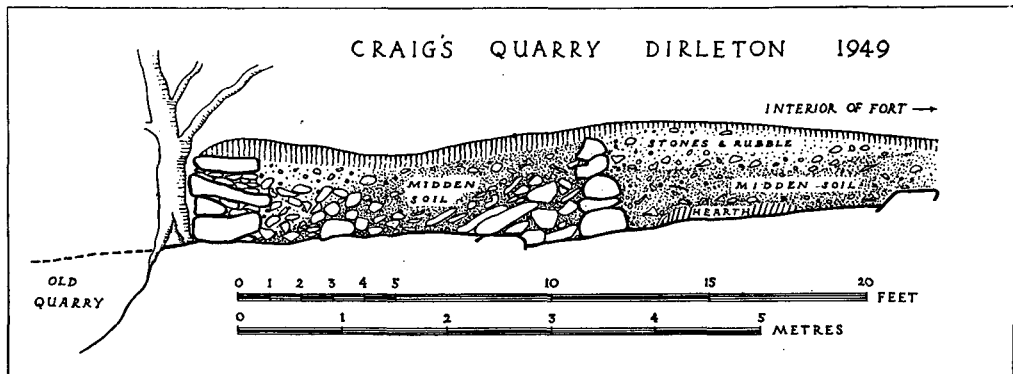


Fig. 5.

Large stones were found to have been carefully built along the inner and outer faces of the wall, and remained to a height of about 3 ft. Between these stone facings, which formed a wall some 14 ft. wide, the core was composed of rubble with large and small stones intermingled with occupation soil, presumably derived from a midden. Animal bones, sea-shells and fragments of pottery were included, and such tip-lines as were visible showed that this material had, as might be expected, been thrown in from the inside of the fort (fig. 5).

More occupation soil of a similar character overlay a hearth with several inches of ashes immediately behind the wall. This soil had accumulated against the inner face. A large number of sherds were recovered, and these included fragments probably representing two large vessels of the type shown in fig. 6. The ware is extremely coarse with a heavy base and the rim roughly flattened.

During the quarrying operations further sherds were recovered (fig. 7, nos. 1-3). No. 1 is a flattened rim of coarse hard black ware; no. 2, a slightly inturred rounded rim of hard light red ware, smoothed and with wiping marks inside; and no. 3 is of finer hard red ware with a scored criss-cross pattern. A fragment of a clay

¹ Varley in *Arch. J.*, cv (1948), 41-66, with refs.

mould was also found (fig. 7, no. 4), probably for casting a bronze object of unknown type. The upper stone of a rotary quern was also found (fig. 8), with two

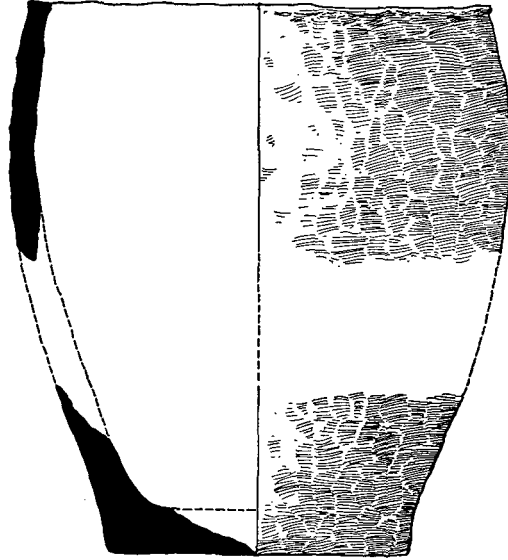


Fig. 6. Restored pot, Craig's Quarry. (‡.)

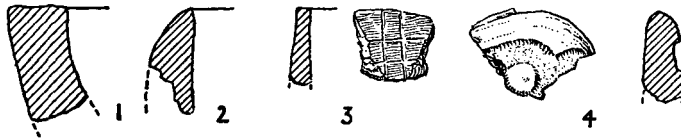


Fig. 7. Sherds (1-3) and fragment of clay mould (4) from Craig's Quarry. (‡.)

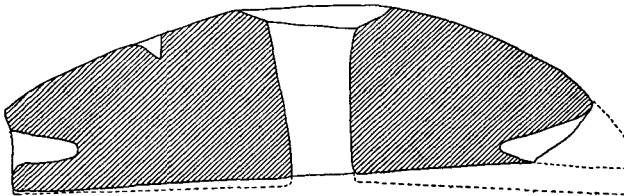


Fig. 8. Upper stone of rotary quern, Craig's Quarry. (‡.)

handle-sockets. In general, the type finds parallels at Barlockhart, Castle Cary and Crock Cleugh, but in no instance is there precise dating. In Scotland such a quern is unlikely to be earlier than the 1st century A.D. Three stone balls were

also found, of a type well known in south-east Scottish native Iron Age sites. The largest is a flattened sphere 2·7 ins. in diameter and 2·1 ins. high; the others are spherical, 2·0 and 0·75 ins. in diameter respectively.

The construction of the wall and its dimensions closely resemble those of the earliest defensive phases at Hownam Rings and Bonchester Hill, attributed to the end of the 1st century B.C.

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