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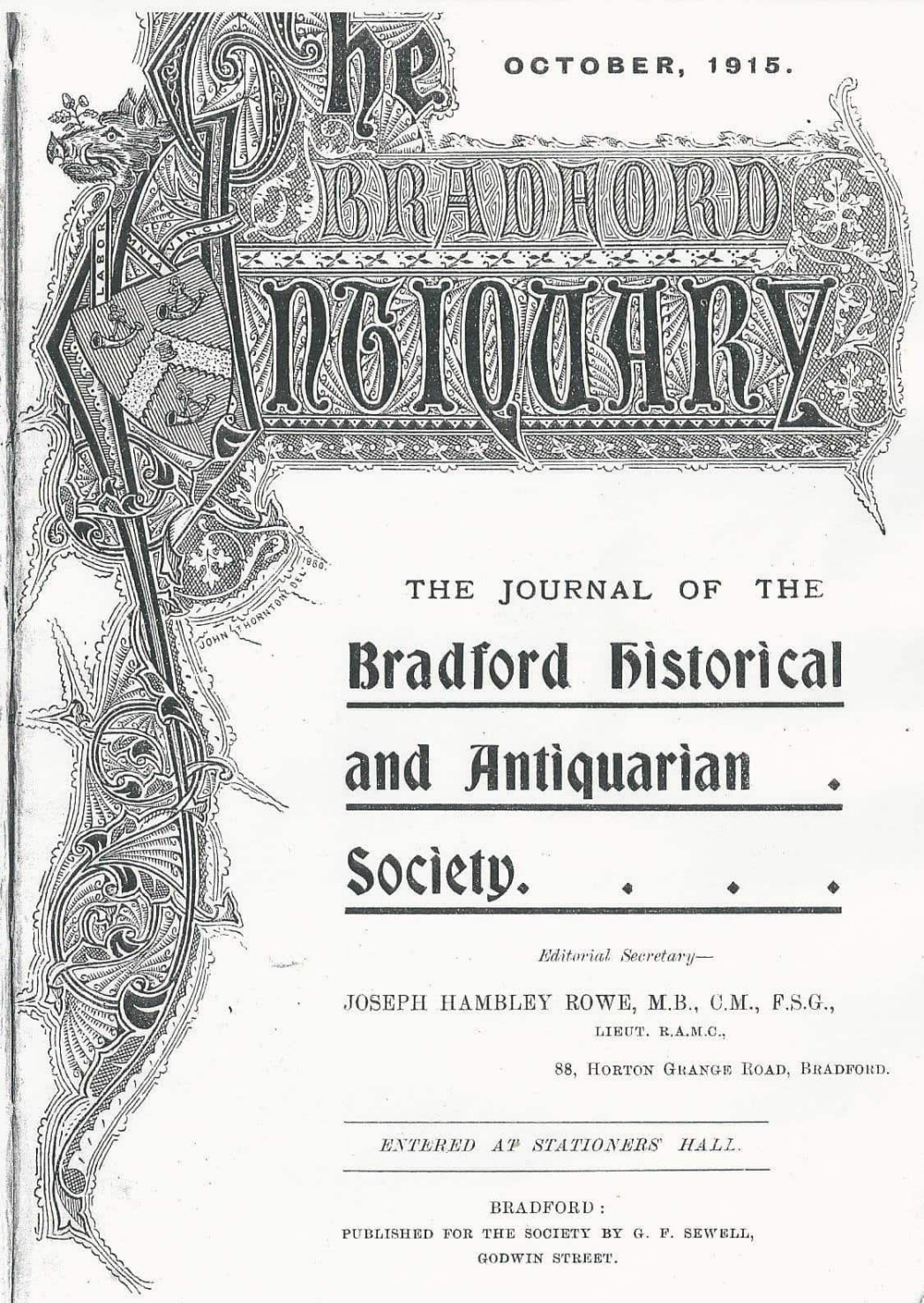
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1915. **SYLLABUS, WINTER SESSION, 1915-1916.**

- Nov. 3 ANNUAL MEETING.
 " 10 " Yorkshire as seen by the older Topographers " MR. BUTLER WOOD, F.R.S.L.
 " 24 " Roman Road from Ribchester to Tebay through Bowland Forest and Lonsdale " (Lantern Lecture) MR. PERCIVAL ROSS, A.M.I.C.E.
 Dec. 8 " The Balkans " MR. G. W. MORRIS, M.A.
 1916.
 Jan. 12 " Historic Homes of Yorkshire " (Second Series) Lantern Lecture Mr. GEO. HEPWORTH
 " 26 " An Antiquary in a Wiltshire Military Camp " LIEUT. J. H. ROWE, R.A.M.C.
 Feb. 9 " Ancient Halls of Halifax Parish " (Lantern Lecture) MR. HUGH P. KENDALL
 " 23 " What Architecture tells us " (Lantern Lecture) MR. FREDERICK CRAVEN, J.P.
 Mar. 8 " The Origin of the Ancient Egyptians " (Lantern Lecture) REV. E. ARMITAGE, M.A.
 " 22 " Old Time Trade Implements " MR. ROSSE BUTTERFIELD
 April 5 " Historical Survey of the Local Mineral Industries " MR. HERBERT MALTBY
 " 19 " Celtic Art " (Lantern Lecture) MR. W. H. MATTHEWS, F.R.G.S., F.R.S.A.I.
 May 3 " War and Religion " REV. F. THEODORE WOODS, M.A. (Vicar of Bradford).

To Non-Members an Admission Fee of 6d is charged for the Lantern Lectures only. Other Lectures Free.



THE JOURNAL OF THE
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 and Antiquarian
 Society.**

Editorial Secretary—

JOSEPH HAMBLEY ROWE, M.B., C.M., F.S.G.,

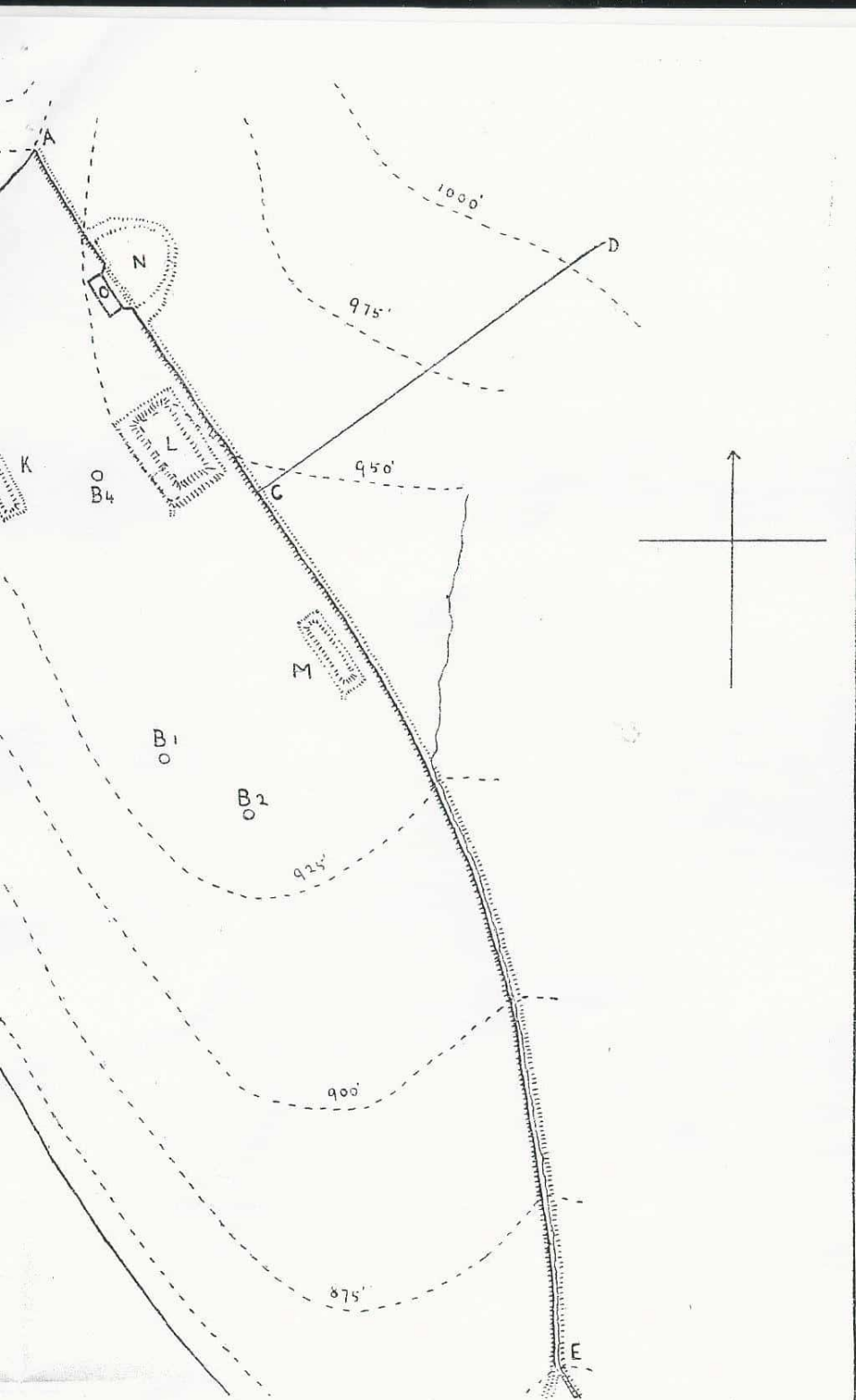
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THE SITE OF NORTON TOWER, RYLSTONE.

BY
F. VILLY, M.D

AT least since the first issue of Whitaker's *History of Craven** a certain amount of mild archæological interest has attached to this place ; for the author then brought to the notice of the general public a series of ancient or fairly old works hereabouts, and gave a certain amount of fact and theory in order to account for them. Not long afterwards Wordsworth (*White Doe*, Canto V.), utilised these observations for imaginative purposes. In fact the site is striking enough to any casual passer-by. A ridge some 600 yards long rises not far eastward of the railway and high road from Skipton to Grassington (themselves 600 to 700 feet above sea-level) to a superior elevation of about 250 feet, fairly gently at the southern end, but more and more steeply along its western flank, until at the northern end the slope is precipitous. Towards the north its crest is broken by the fissured stump of the tower, and behind it the fells again rise, at first gradually, for a further height of about 700 feet, forming a ragged edge of rocks against the sky-line.† And if one climbs to the tower the reverse view is not easily forgotten, for (except where Flasby Fell blocks the sight) a huge stretch of the more open country to the west is revealed in more than a semi-circle spread out beneath one's feet, while a backing of range

* All except one of the references in this paper are to this volume, third edition.

† A survey of this ridge is shown in Fig. 1, and a general view from the west in Fig. 2.

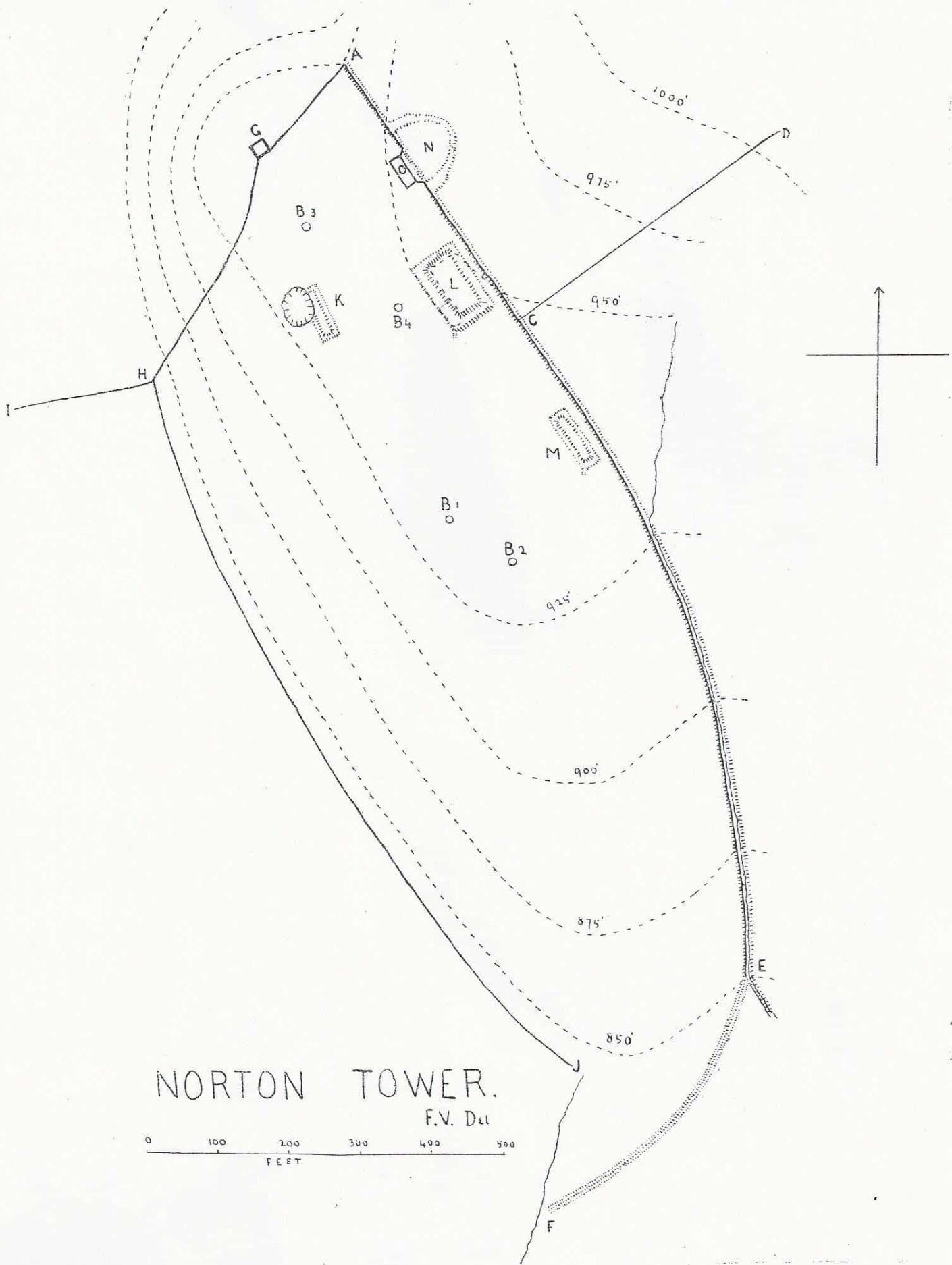


Fig. 1.

after range completes the picture. It follows that the site, rough and desolate enough in itself, is exposed to most of the unpleasantnesses which the Craven climate can produce. Mists are frequent, and but seldom does the wind hold its peace. Though not altogether remote from human habitation, the tower is near the southern boundary of the parish of Rylstone, and lies a mile from the village, towards which nestling spot a series of tracks can be traced almost continuously; and it is there that the reputed builder of the tower apparently had his regular summer quarters in a somewhat pretentious manor-house (p. 520).

The whole ridge is eminently defensible towards the north and west. The south also would not be difficult to guard with the help of a defensive work, such as perhaps covers it; and the eastern flank in its southern parts is somewhat protected by a slight hollow which (as we shall see) has apparently been utilised for that purpose. However the northern part of the eastern flank naturally forms a gentle slope down from higher ground, and here the apparently defensive work has been continued to meet the northern steep fall of ground from the ridge, and so all the more easily attacked parts are covered and made safe, provided a sufficient garrison were present. The tower itself is pitched on the point of greatest military strength. What has been noted above as perhaps a defence is a slight earthwork, fosse to the south and east, and vallum to the north and west, shown from F *via* E and C to A on Fig. 1. To this in parts a dry wall from three to four feet in thickness has been added at a later date, and, standing partly in the fosse, it forms a revetment to the vallum. This wall shows very plainly from A to C. South of C a modern fence overlies and almost hides it. Probably it stretched nearly as far as E, but beyond that point there is no definite sign that it ever existed. From the northern end (A) of this wall a branch of dissimilar construction makes an acute angle with it and proceeds straight to the south-east corner of the tower G; no fosse or

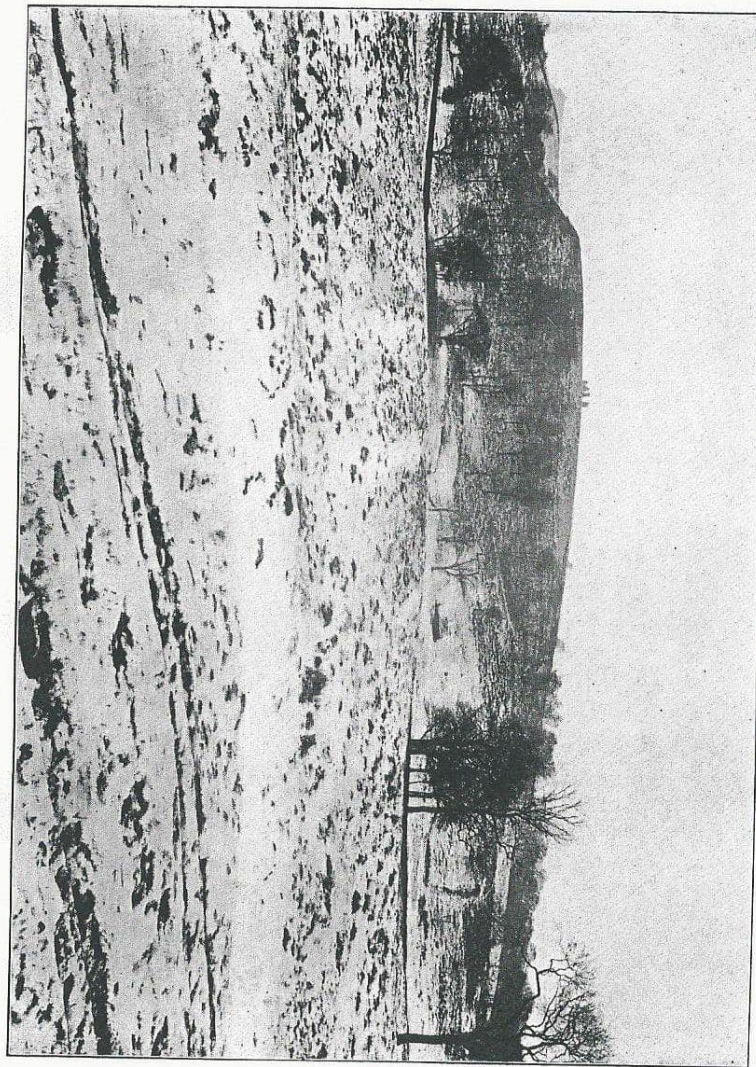


Fig. 2.

vallum shows here and this wall does not follow the naturally defensive edge of the precipice. From the south-west corner of the tower what seems to be a continuation of this line strikes off down the slope, then runs along that slope (again not in the position naturally to be chosen for defence) and, after throwing off a secondary branch which can be followed for some distance straight down the steep hill to I, it sweeps round and can be traced (with considerable gaps here and there) to the point J. This wall may fairly be assumed to have once enclosed the upper parts of the ridge by linking up both ends of the eastern wall; but clearly it has not joined the south-western end of the earthwork, nor is it easy to regard it as belonging to the system apparently shadowed by that earthwork, which does not look as if it had contemplated complete enclosure of any kind. The mode of junction at A, the way in which it connects with the tower and throws off a branch down the hill, its position on the slope and its apparent failure to aim for the south-west end of the earthwork, all seem to proclaim this, as also that its primary purpose was not defence. To enclose a considerable area related to the tower seems to have been its aim (although defence may well have been a secondary object); whereas (at least so far as position goes) the aim of the earthwork seems to have been to cover the more easily approached parts of the ridge. As we shall see, the eastern wall was certainly added to the pre-existing earthwork, and the probabilities seem to be that the walls are all of one general date and originated with or after the tower, the eastern length taking advantage of the already existing vallum and fosse largely as a matter of convenience. I judge this date to be generally that of the tower not only from the mutual relations of the two but also because excavation has pretty clearly shown that the building at O was part of the wall system and was itself of about the date of the tower. But tower, walls and earthwork do not by any means exhaust the interest of the site, for three long mounds similar to those at Sutton (*Bradford Antiquary*,

1910, p. 335) also exist on the ridge, as well as a considerable number (about 25) of small heaps of stone which it can hardly be doubted are barrows—most probably of the bronze age.*

As the latest date with which we are concerned is most easily arrived at and with least uncertainty, let us try to follow the course of events backwards. After the "Rising of the North" in 1569, the Nortons, who then owned Rylstone, were exiled or executed in proportion to their powers of flight. For some years the estate lay desolate, and was then granted to the Clifford family, of Skipton, who had previously been overlords. The tower, therefore, was almost certainly not inhabited after 1570 or so; and, as at least some of the works hereabouts had pretty clearly long been obnoxious to the Cliffords, there cannot be much doubt that they were more or less ruined immediately after the ruin of the builder. For Whitaker (p. 524) quotes Dodsworth to the effect that tradition in his almost contemporary days ascribed the tower to Richard Norton, the last of his line, who probably came into the estate in about the year 1540. Such testimony is not to be neglected, and Mr. W. M. P'Anson, tells me that (so far as he can judge from photographs) the evidence from the tower itself is quite in keeping with it. Similar pele-towers were not infrequently built during the first half of the sixteenth century, not only in the unquiet border counties but also a good deal further south. As to the reason for its erection, let us consider Whitaker's evidence and views.

A dispute began during the tenure of Rylstone by the first Norton (John) to hold land hereabouts. It concerned the hunting rights in the township, both Norton and the then Clifford of Skipton claiming free warren. P. 522 (note) shows that it was already in full swing by about 1530, for a subpoena was then directed to the first Earl of Cumberland from the court at York. In the latter end of Henry VIII.'s reign the following passed from the

* Fig. 2 was taken from close by Canon Greenwell's celebrated mound clxii. in *British Barrows*.

Privy Council to the Earl of Shrewsbury, Lieut.-General in the North:—"After commendation, etc.—Whereas complaynt hath lately byn made to the Quenes Highness (Catherine Parr) that my Lorde of Cumberlande, p'tending right of forest w'thin certayne grounds belonging to John Norton wher ye sayd Norton dothe clayme Free Warren, hath now of late not onlie intruded ther, but causyd alsoe sundrie of his s'vants to cast down ye hedges and dykes, etc.

"This shall be to advertize yow that ye Quenes Graces pleasure is that yo' putting my s^d Lord of Cumberlande in rem'brance what unmeet a tyme this is for th' attempting of such thinges, the Kinges Majestie being now owte of ye realme, yow shall wth good delyberation, as yow may, tak such ordre yn this matt^r as to reason and good equitie shall ap'tayne . . ." (p. 525). Among the testimony of seven witnesses for the Clifford side (p. 305) is the following:—"Lancelot Marton, of Eshton, Esq., saith, That he was a boy, and, together with his father, he did see the keepers of Skipton Forest hunt and chase deer out of the grounds of Rilston; . . . till now of late that Master Norton hath walled his grounds of Rilston, where the foresters were wont to walk, and to draw my lord of Cumberland's deer into his ground he hath made a wall on an high rigge, beside a quagmire, and at the end of the wall he hath rayled the ground, so that it is a destruction to my lord's deer, so many as come." Now Master Marton was a follower of my lord, and may well have been prejudiced. He probably only judged or misjudged Master Norton's reasons for building walls; but his evidence is sufficient to prove that a wall was built, and, the ground still being soft at the foot of the Norton Tower "rigge," almost to make it certain that at least part of the walling already described is the one referred to by him. In addition, enclosure of some sort is mentioned in the Privy Council's letter; and we can hardly doubt that these enclosures in dispute were substantially the same in the two cases, although, as Whitaker says (p. 525), the Cliffords them-

selves subsequently enclosed the same ground, with part of the fell above, for a park.* This subsequent enclosure probably accounts for some of the walls.

It seems then that for some years the Nortons had been putting up enclosures in Rylstone, almost certainly on the fells about the tower ; that the Cliffords, whether with reason or not, believed these to be designed to entrap the deer, or that they otherwise interfered with their rights, and proceeded to tear them down again. Perhaps this gives an adequate reason for the erection of the tower. It is clearly a dwelling-place designed for strength, and though it would not stand a serious siege it would be a very suitable shelter for a band of watchers over the Norton interests. And clearly the walls could be used for herding deer. Enclosures for such a purpose were not infrequent in deer-forests, and are referred to in mediæval deeds as "hayes." At the same time Whitaker's inference (p. 524) is an impossible one, though his concluding clause is to the point. He calls the wall and entrenchment a "deer-pound," and says :—"The principle of them (deer-pounds) was something like that of a wire mouse-trap. On the declivity of a steep hill, the bottom of which was fenced so as to be impassable, a wall was constructed nearly level with the surface on the outside, yet so high within that without wings it was impossible to escape in the opposite direction. Care was probably taken that these enclosures should contain better feed than the neighbouring parks or forests ; and whoever is acquainted with the habits of these sequacious animals will easily conceive that, if the leader was once tempted to descend into the snare, a herd would follow ; to recover which there were probably more frays than lawsuits." The eastern entrenchment is built on a gentle slope, not a steep one ; the fosse is outside or (in parts) up the slope, the vallum and wall being inside or down hill, so that if the work was constructed to bar passage, that passage was inwards, not outwards ; and there are signs

* This park is shown on old maps. Tuke (who makes the greatest parade of accuracy) marks it as entirely west of the tower.

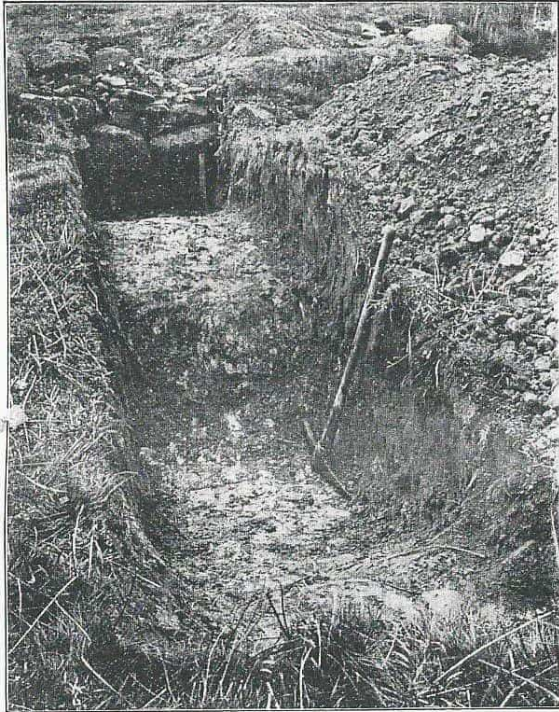


Fig. 3.

of an entrance (N, Fig. 1) which can only have been constructed for defensive purposes. The likelihood, then, seems to be that the eastern wall at any rate was put up by the Nortons, probably in connection with deer, that it was made somewhat defensive in design in order to guard against possible raids from Skipton, and that the tower was placed to hold the watchers. Of course nothing can have been intended for a permanent defence, for hundreds of men would have been necessary as a garrison; but a few resolute guardians would be able to hinder a small number of opponents in an attempt to drive off deer, at least for some time. Whether the earthwork was simply an earlier perhaps palisaded edition of the same design or was built for an entirely different purpose is less easy to decide.

Let us now take the eastern wall and the earthwork in more detail. The fosse as a rule is only a puny thing, and the vallum, probably formed from the upcast, not much better. Where I have trenched it the ditch is only $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet across and 20 inches deep (measured from subsoil), the subsoil sloping up from the rounded bottom more sharply to the western than to the eastern lip (*see* Figs. 3 and 4). The vallum corresponds with it in size. As one goes southwards from C the fosse gradually becomes larger and carries a small stream of water. Probably, especially as the vallum retains the same dimensions all along, advantage has been taken of an already existing stream-bed, the material being placed along its western edge. The wall is recessed at N and forms the eastern side of an apparently oblong building of which the southern and western walls remain in good condition in part. The position of the northern wall and of the northern part of the western wall can only be inferred from a mass of rubble. Only one trench was taken across the interior, which was not further cleared on account of the unproductive nature of the material. There seemed to be a very rough flooring of angular stone, but it was impossible to differentiate it with certainty from fallen walls. In the centre was a hearth, eighteen inches square,

of flags deeply reddened by fire on their upper surfaces, and with much charcoal scattered round. A few pieces of red glazed ware, probably dating from about the year 1500, were found both inside and outside the position of the western wall, and a flint flake in the surface soil outside the eastern wall. The main wall was terribly decayed at its junction with the S.E. corner of this building, as was that corner; but, so far as one could judge, there had been an interruption here forming an entrance about two feet wide. It will be noticed that the vallum, though not the wall, is missing for a few feet south of this point. This probably marks the original entrance to the earthwork; but there is no hope of proving the point, for a diversion of the fosse in an irregular semi-circular form, to rejoin again north of the whole recessed entrance, begins opposite the gap. Though very slight, this semi-circular fosse can have had no use except to bar access to the entrance. The line of the fosse and vallum is continued by slighter signs across this recess in the wall. Trenching proves that this was the original line. Fig. 3, taken from the east, shows in order (a) the fosse with pick (length 3 feet 2 inches) standing in it, (b) the rise (16 inches high and 6 feet wide) of the much flattened vallum, and (c) the eastern wall of the building (O) with a very slight gutter cut in the subsoil just outside it—no doubt for drainage. Charcoal was abundant hereabouts, but nothing else was found. All this suggests that the wall was added to the earthwork, a difference in position and in mode of forming the entrance throwing a short length of the fosse and vallum out of use, and that most probably the covering fosse was added at this time. That the wall was the later structure was conclusively proved by a cut a few yards further north, where the fosse (so far as it was opened) was found to be of the same shape and dimensions as before, but containing in its western part the wall standing on ten inches of filling (Fig. 4). Not much as to the interval between the digging of the fosse and the putting up of the wall can be judged from this: we

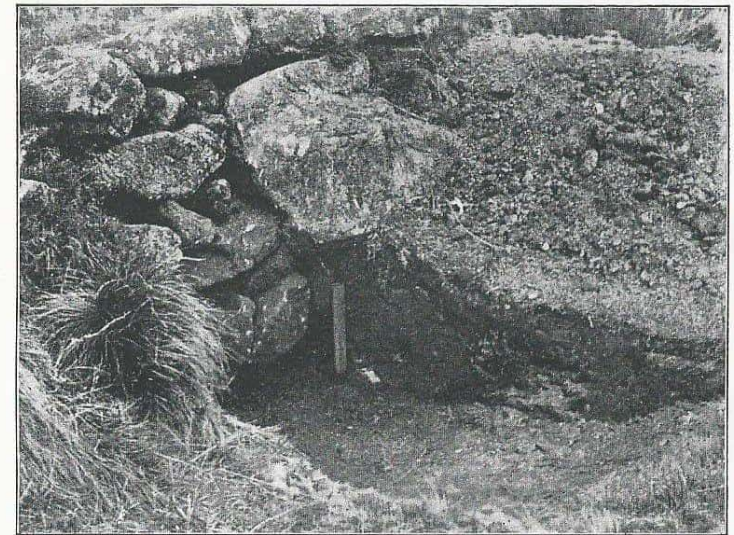


Fig. 4.

can only assert that an interval must have existed. As Mr. A. H. Allcroft, who has most kindly interested himself in the question, points out, the only way by which the date of the earthwork can be determined is by clearing a considerable length of the fosse in the hope of finding datable objects at the bottom. But the paucity of finds so far is not encouraging, and the shallowness of the silting in the fosse, as well as possibilities of disturbance during the building, might render conclusions indefinite even if objects were turned up from such a depth.

With regard to the meaning of the earthwork, only a few remarks can therefore be hazarded. Its disposition resembles that of a defensive work somewhat in the nature of a "promontory fort:" against this is its slightness. Its association with barrows suggests a prehistoric age, as perhaps does its disposition: against this again is its slightness. Its association with the wall and with the historic quarrel in late mediæval times suggests that it was merely part of a first edition of the walled enclosure: this possibility cannot be denied. As we shall see, however, there was probably some intermediate use for the site in early mediæval times, to which period the long mounds (clearly similar to those at Sutton) seem to belong. There are several other cases in which long but slight entrenchments of doubtful purpose seem to be associated with such mounds; and this suggests such a period for the earthwork. To this supposition I am inclined on the whole, though how to explain its meaning must then remain wholly doubtful.

I do not propose to dwell much on the long mounds, two of which (L, M) have been investigated. They yielded no finds except small scraps of charcoal. As at Sutton, but in less degree, they showed signs of having been built in layers. No theory as to their meaning is ready for publication as yet. We may, however, note three points:—(a) two (L and especially M) seem to show a relation to the vallum. The way in which the eastern edge of the fosse surrounding M just borders the western edge

of the vallum is quite striking. (b) The same two show a slight prolongation of the fosse from the S.W. corners down the hill. This looks like a desire to keep them dry. (c) One (K) has been partially destroyed by a quarry. Now it is hard to believe that any builders except of the tower would resort to this inaccessible place for digging stone. Nor do I think that good building stone such as forms most of the casing of the tower could be obtained from so shallow a pit; but certainly much of the rubble core of that structure could be dug here. If the quarry was opened for building the tower, then the use for the mounds had already disappeared by about the year 1500. This fits in with the scanty finds in such mounds at Sutton and Rathmell.

Four barrows—marked B 1 to 4 in Fig. 1—have been opened, in each case by a trench of approximately the full width of the mound struck from the south and carried well past the centre. For all practical purposes we may be certain that no interments were overlooked. B 1 was 12 feet in diameter and 18 to 24 inches high. It consisted of boulders, then on the level of the soil came a layer of peaty matter running up to twelve inches thick. Just south of the centre the subsoil had been dug out previously to a funnel-shaped pit, oval at the bottom where it measured 3 feet 6 inches by 3 feet (the long diameter pointing east and west) and 3 feet deep from the subsoil level. It had been refilled with the soil removed (a mixture of sand and stone), together with a little of the surface soil here and there, and mixed with the filling were a number of small pieces of charcoal. These last formed quite a layer at the bottom. The excavation was carried to the solid rock, which lay only a few inches deeper, but nothing further was found. The remainder had no peaty layer.

B 2 was similar in size. Scraps of charcoal were present on the subsoil, which was abominably hard and showed no signs of ever having been disturbed.

B 3 was somewhat larger (23 feet north and south, 17 feet east and west, 2 feet high). The appearances were

almost exactly as in B 1. The pit (2 feet deep from the subsoil) contained less charcoal, and had been formed with no small labour by removing the upper loose layers of sandstone. The floor was solid rock. Nothing was found in addition.

B 4 was like B 1 and B 2 in size. Scraps of charcoal were present on the subsoil and for a few inches deep in it, and there were signs that the subsoil had been disturbed for a depth of about two feet, but no foreign matter was mixed in, nor could the point be proved definitely. Certainly the size of any pit could not be defined.

The only possible explanation of these mounds is that they are barrows. The pits are just large enough to contain a contracted body, and the presence of charcoal in such a connection is usual, if not universal. In such soils a body simply inhumed is known to disappear completely during the centuries, and burial without grave furniture is the rule rather than the exception. We must suppose that such has been the case here.

EXPLANATION OF FIGURES (Photos. by F.V.).

Fig. 1. General plan of the site. References have been given in the text.

Fig. 2. General view of the site from the west.

Fig. 3. Trench transversely to the vallum, etc., at the centre of the recessed entrance. Explained in the text. Taken from the east.

Fig. 4. Transverse clearing of the fosse a little north of the recessed entrance. The wall is seen standing in the fosse and placed upon 10 inches of filling. Taken from the south-east.