

## EXCAVATIONS AT CULLYKHAN, CASTLE POINT, TROUP, BANFFSHIRE

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The purpose of this brief paper is to correlate the prehistoric building phases of a site whose complexity can perhaps be realised by the fact that excavation has revealed an almost continuous occupation on Cullykhan from the 4th century BC to the 19th century AD, thus proving the superb defensive potential of this North-East coastal site (NJ 616661). The area of the site plan (Fig. 1) which is relevant to this commentary is restricted to that part marked Knoll and Iron Age Area, though further information with regard to the complete excavation is available in the published interim report<sup>1</sup>. A detailed study of the section which was taken through the west rampart will help interpret the building sequence of this complex site.

### The Section (Fig. 2)

This section contains an important feature, namely, the vitrified remains of a timber-laced rampart whose foundation stones and timbers lie directly on or are imbedded into an earlier occupation horizon (b). The inner revetting wall built of shale or schist and sandstone blocks has two courses remaining in situ, though the large unburned schist slabs are undoubtedly part of higher courses. The shattered rampart core lies on a platform of charred longitudinal timbers and consists of heated shale fragments, disintegrated quartzites, and heat-shattered boulders, with signs of extreme heat under the vitrified mass. No definitive evidence remains of the outer revetting wall, therefore robbing may account for the deep layer of loose brown earthy rubble with fragments of vitrification (f). It is hoped that the 1971 excavation may reveal the position and dimensions of the outer revetting wall, thus providing the exact width of the original timber-laced rampart. On a yellowish clayey subsoil (a) lies an area of tightly packed cobbling on whose surface rests a hard-packed grey occupation horizon (b) containing bronze and iron industrial waste in the form of crucible or furnace-working fragments with traces of copper alloys on the surfaces, and iron-working tap-slag<sup>2</sup>. This layer becomes looser (c), flecked with charcoal, and contains numerous calcined animal bone fragments, plus concentrated areas of heat-shattered firestones. A tightly packed brownish-red clay zone (j) with its associated post-hole suggests either palisade or house wall remains, as other post-holes have been uncovered from the same horizon. Behind the inner revetting wall lies a loose brown earthy layer with small angular stones, while immediately above rests a great accumulation of fallen angular

# CULLYCHAN PENINSULAR

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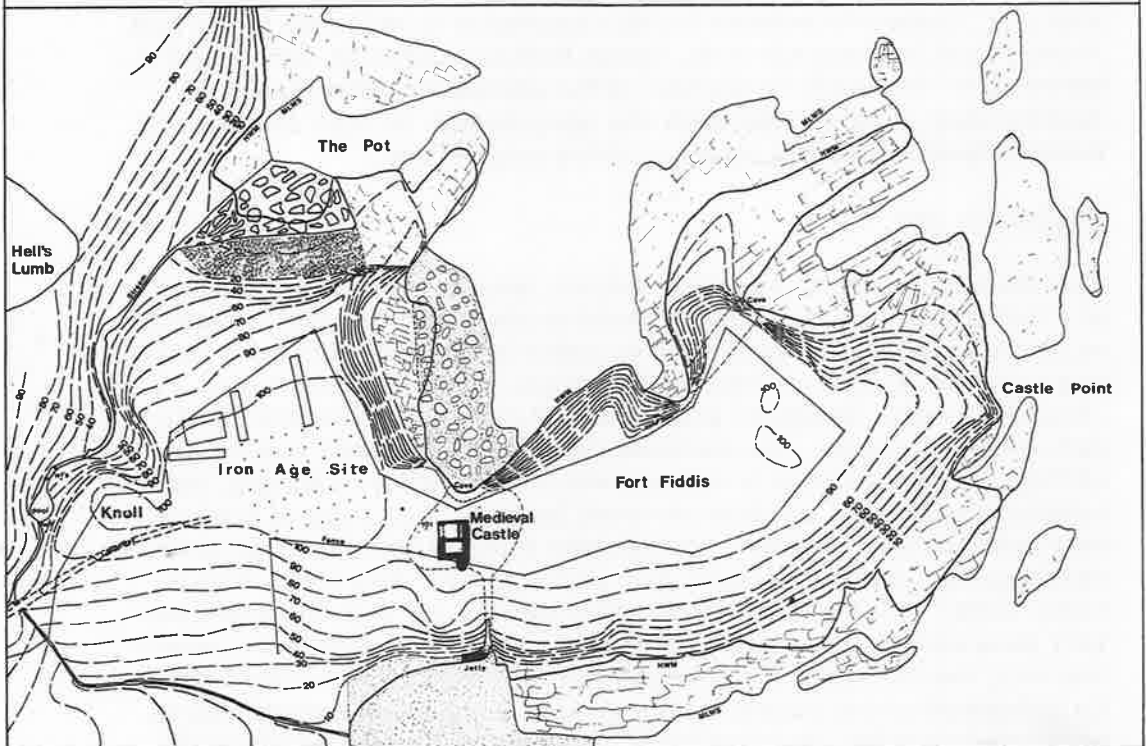


Figure 1. Site plan.

shale slabs with air spaces. These shale slabs gradually merge into a mass of shale rubble and greyish earth (h) which is then covered by a grey peaty topsoil (i).

The following building phases can now be established:

Phase I - Cobbling with associated occupation (a, b, c) containing industrial waste. It is probable that further excavation will prove a distinct two-part phasing of these horizons.

Phase IIa - The building of a timber-framed fort directly above the Phase I occupation level.

Phase IIb - Destruction of timber-framed fort and its resulting vitrification.

#### Area Excavation

Extensive excavation in the north-east corner of the Iron Age Area has uncovered a Phase I domestic structure whose floor consisted of a tightly packed cobbled surface, upon which lies a hard-packed grey occupation-horizon covered by a much looser dark, charcoal flecked stratum, with a well-constructed circular hearth, whose slightly raised kerb enclosed a flat area of what appeared to be crushed heated conglomerate.

Finds from the occupation levels include distinctive pottery rims (described in detail Fig. 4); wall sherds of a hard extremely gritty type; Late Bronze Age tanged chisel<sup>3</sup> and fragments of jet bangles. Therefore the stratigraphy of this area almost duplicates that of the previously discussed section, apart from the important segregation of industrial and domestic finds within the occupation horizons.

#### Phase I Timber Gate-tower

Work on the Knoll exposed the ground plan of a massive timber gate-tower (Fig. 3) whose method of construction probably entailed digging four rectangular trenches into which were built pairs of drystone post-sockets (marked on plan 2, 3; 4, 5; 6, 7; 8, 9) whose average dimensions are 61 cm deep and 41 cm wide. Into these post-holes were placed the massive timber uprights, then the spaces between wood and stone filled by making use of flat, narrow packing stones and clay. This timber structure would then doubtless support a substantial rectangular gatehouse. A section taken across post-holes 2 and 3 revealed a perfectly preserved oak stump 46 cm high and 41 cm in diameter<sup>4</sup>. Post-socket 1 implies some form of bracing timber, while the sockets 6 and 10 suggest a funnel-shaped timber palisade entrance,

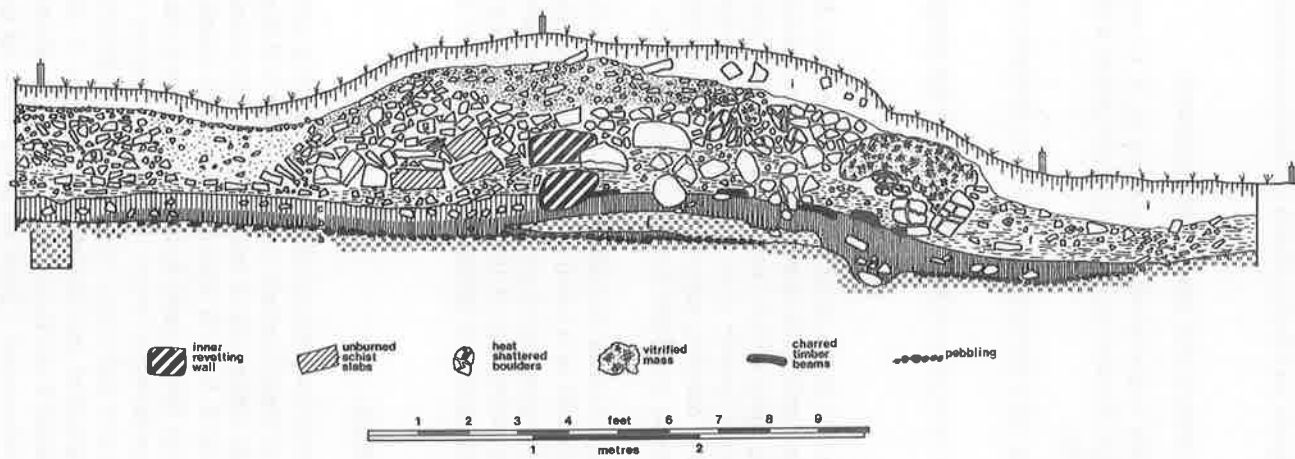


Figure 2. Section across west rampart.

though proof of this latter statement requires extensive excavation. Apart from the timber slot with its direct relationship to post-holes 7 and 8, excavation has so far failed to uncover evidence of the exact method of gate construction. It was noted that the primary cobbled or pebbled horizon, over which lay a sterile burnt timber layer, had been taken over the edge of the post-sockets and probably continued to the sides of the timber uprights. Partial excavation to the north of the Gateway exposed an interesting series of post-holes set into a hard-beaten clay floor. Other features include collapsed pebble and clay walling and a large flat-stoned hearth surrounded by a concentrated carbon deposit from which was recovered a fragment of jet bracelet.

### Phase III

The following are indications of a Phase III, post-vitrification reconstruction of the site: (1) Foundation walling in Gateway area; (2) Late Roman sherds from upper horizon on Knoll (3rd to 4th century AD); (3) Radiocarbon date (320-420 AD) from a large wooden object found on a Phase I cobbled floor.

There is therefore at Cullykhan an almost continuous occupation sequence from an early iron/bronze working culture, through a series of re-organised defences, to a people who had acquired, possibly by means of indirect trade, 4th century Roman pottery.

### Cullykhan Radiocarbon Dates

The dates listed below were obtained from the British Museum Research Laboratory.

	C-14 Date (5568 half life)	Most recent tree-ring correction to calendar yrs (Seuss 1971 in press) ( $\pm$ one standard deviation)	Description and location of sample
BM 443	106 $\pm$ 51 BC	50 AD - 150 BC	Carbon from Knoll burnt timber layer
BM 444	1186 $\pm$ 60 BC	1350 - 1500 BC	Sample of charred longitudinal timber platform Phase IIb
BM 445	317 $\pm$ 40 AD	420 - 320 AD	Sample from Phase III wooden object

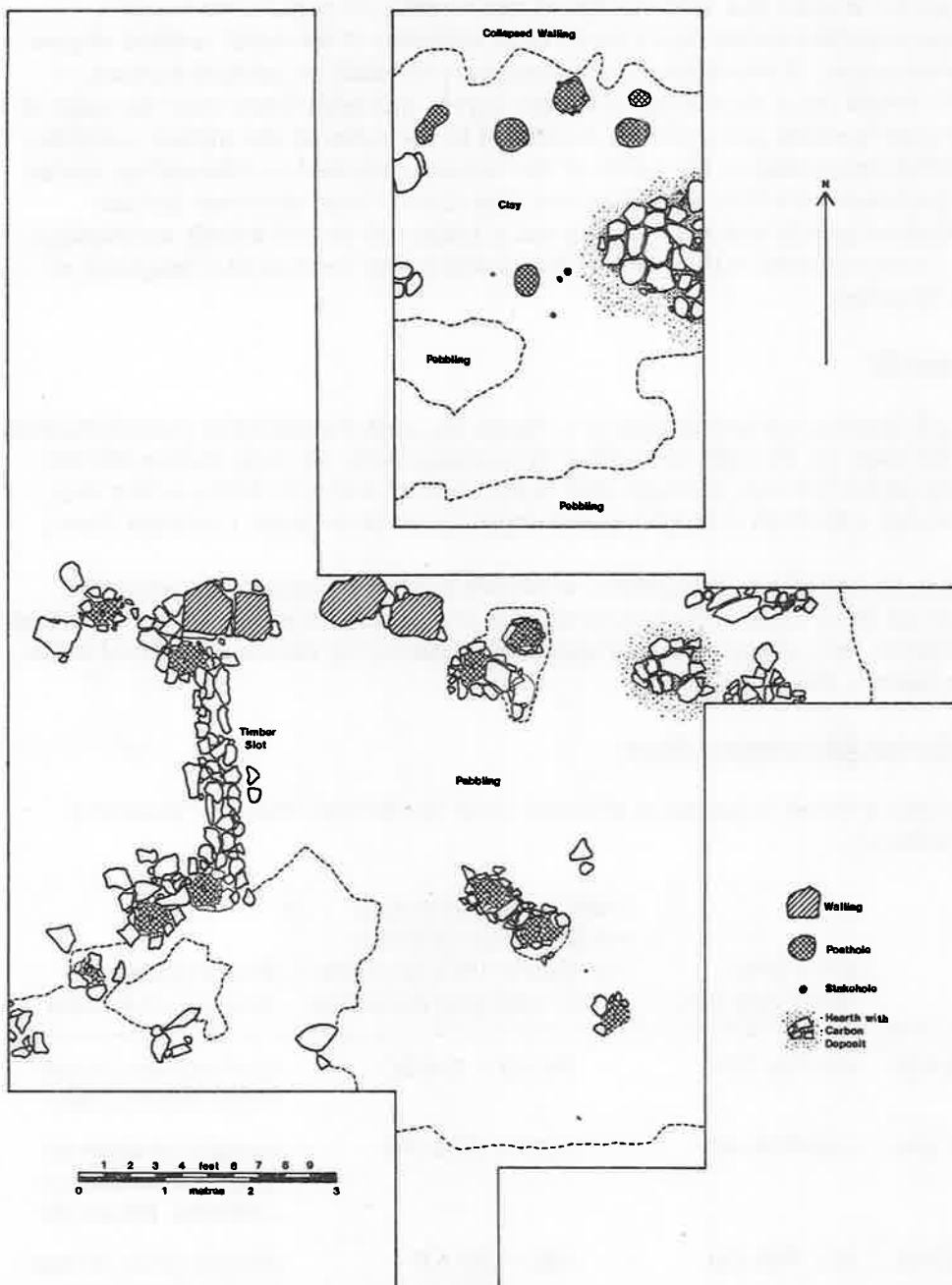


Figure 3. Plan of timber gateway.

	C-14 Date (5568 half life)	Most recent tree-ring correction to calendar yrs (Seuss 1971 in press) ( $\pm$ one standard deviation)	Description and location of sample
BM 446	387 $\pm$ 65 BC	420 - 530 BC	Sample of carbon from Phase I occ. level
BM 639	397 $\pm$ 59 BC	420 - 530 BC	Section of oak stump post-socket Phase I

### Notes

1. Aberdeen University Review XLIII (Spring 1970), 274-83.
2. All this material has been examined by Dr Hugh McKerrell of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland.
3. Aberdeen University Review XLIII (Spring 1970), 278.
4. Timber stump now in care of Dr Hugh McKerrell, National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland.

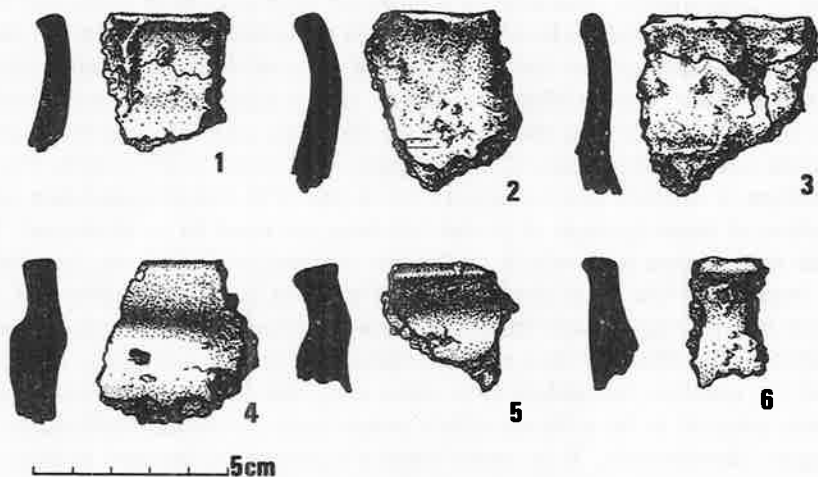


Figure 4. Rim sherds from Phase I; 1 and 3-6 are dark buff in colour.  
 1. Sooty external surface, rolled inner lip, hard fabric, numerous small pieces of grit; 2. Buff external surface, dark centre, biscuit internal surface, rolled lip, hard fabric, small grit on external face but smooth internal surface; 3. Rolled lip, extremely hard fabric, numerous small quartzite grit; 4. High prominent shoulder, hard fabric, small grit; 5. High shoulder, hard fabric, small grit; 6. Straight side below rim, hard fabric, small grit.