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TONGE CASTLE.

BY A. H. A. HOGG.

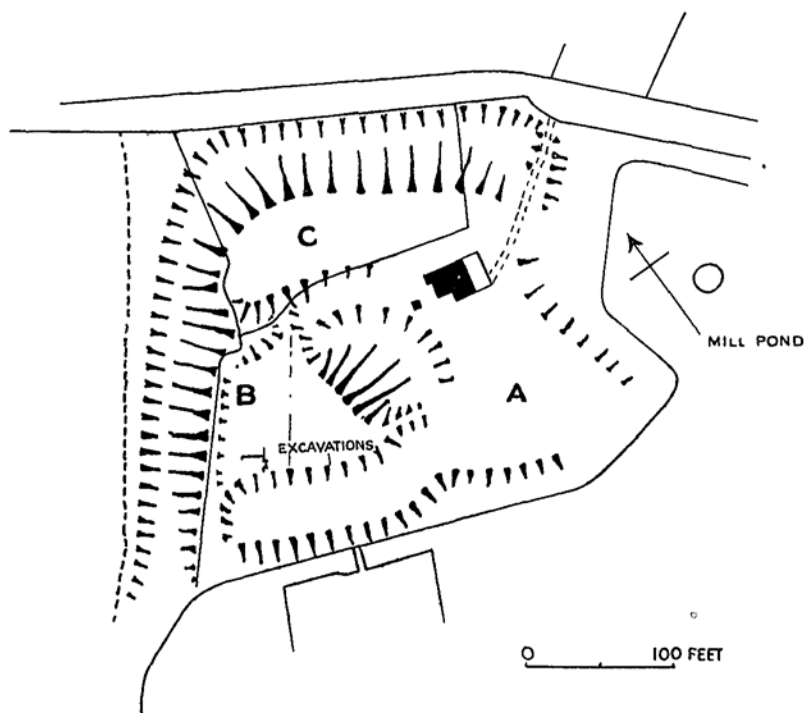
THE earthworks known as Tonge Castle stand about 25 feet above O.D., on the north side of a small valley leading north-east towards the Thames marshes. The main defences consist of a deep and wide ditch, now dry, on the north-east and north-west sides. The south and west sides are at present protected by a mill pond. This has apparently been altered in modern times, and there is no indication whether the main ditch ever extended round these sides ; the question cannot be definitely settled, but it is at least possible that a pond always formed part of the defences, for a mill at Tonge is mentioned in Domesday.

I am indebted to Mr. W. F. Wood and the Rev. H. F. Lord for the information that the first land valuation of Tonge Parish, made about 1834, makes mention of "Tonge Mills," and in more detail refers to them as a "Wind Mill and Orchard," and a "New Water Mill, Head, and Island." This seems to indicate that about this date the pond may have been deepened and enlarged, which would account for the disappearance of the large ditch on that side.

The pond and ditch enclose a roughly rectangular area. The interior has been much disturbed and it is difficult to trace the original plan. The entrance seems to have been on the north-east, as at present. This leads to an area (A on plan) only slightly raised above the level of the pond. From this a narrow bank leads to the flat top of B, protected on the east by a scarp and ditch, and on the west by a slight hedgebank and the main ditch. On the south side there is now a steep scarp, a terrace 40 feet wide, and another scarp down to the water's edge, but this may not represent the original form of the works. It seems probable that part of the hillock has been removed to form the island in the mill pond. On the north side of area B another narrow bank

leads to a still higher area C. This was under cultivation and was not examined. It is probably the site of the Wind Mill mentioned in the Land Valuation.

In the spring of 1930, the Rev. H. F. Lord, vicar of Bapchild, invited the writer to supervise some trial excavations on the site. Digging was commenced on the south-west of area B, and almost at once the end of a flint wall was



TONGE CASTLE: PLAN OF SITE.
(Kent. Sheet 33, N.W.)

found. Further excavation uncovered part of a rectangular building, as indicated on the plan of excavations. The walls were 14 inches thick, built of flint with some blocks of shaped stone, and covered on the inside with plaster. At the east end was a blocked door 4 feet wide, with jambs of squared stone. Spaces 1 inch wide remained between the masonry filling and the jambs, probably due to the presence of wood

when the door was built up. The walls were not bonded at the corners, the longer wall making straight joints against the sides of the east and west walls. The interior of the building was filled with fallen rubble, and the original floor was not found. Outside the north wall was a layer of black earth containing pottery (Section EF), and outside the east wall was more fallen rubble.

Another wall 2 feet thick was found in a second trench some distance to the east. Its position relative to the rectangular building is shown on the plan. A curious feature is that it appears to have been built with very little foundation immediately above the vertical side of a ditch 2 feet deep (Section GH).

With the exception of two iron nails and a large lump of burnt clay, the only objects found were potsherds. All the pottery except one fragment of La Tène ware can be paralleled by that from Rayleigh Castle, Essex,¹ which dates from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, but the rims from Tonge are for the most part wider and flatter. Fragments representing a total of over forty different vessels were found. These include seven bases and twenty-three rims. All the bases are of the sagging type. Except where otherwise described, the fabric of the pottery contains numerous white particles, apparently crushed shells.

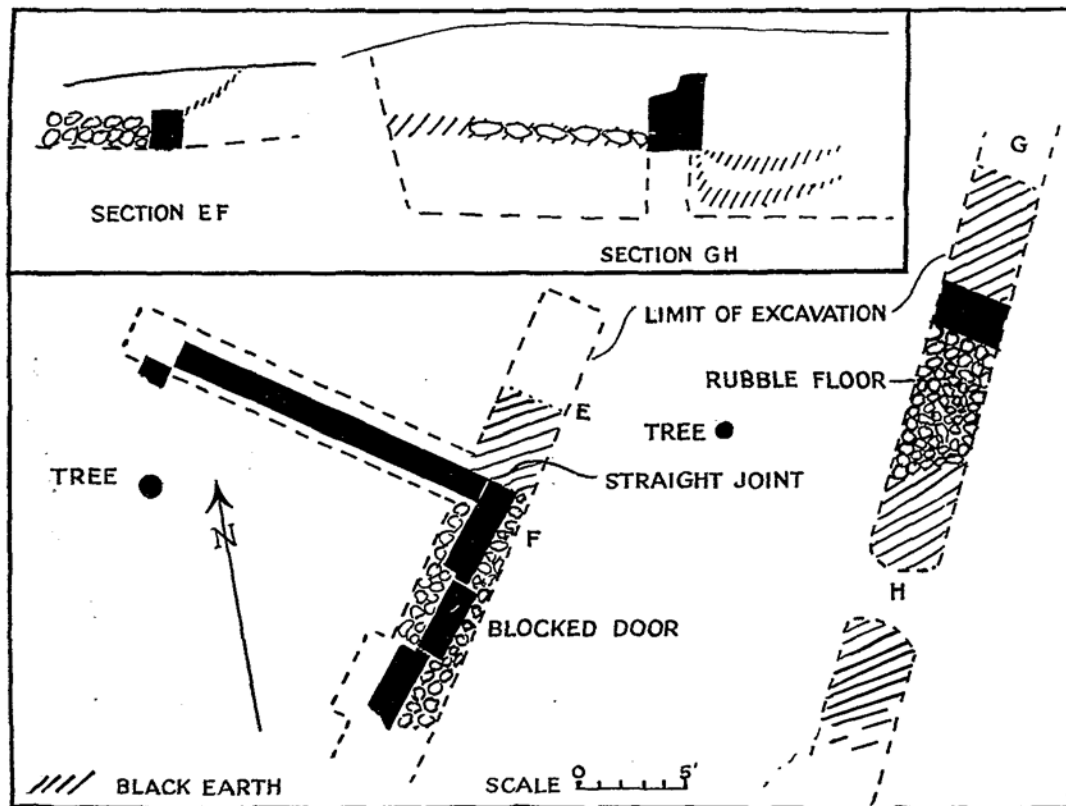
In the following description of the pottery the sites referred to are :

Site I. Inside the rectangular building.

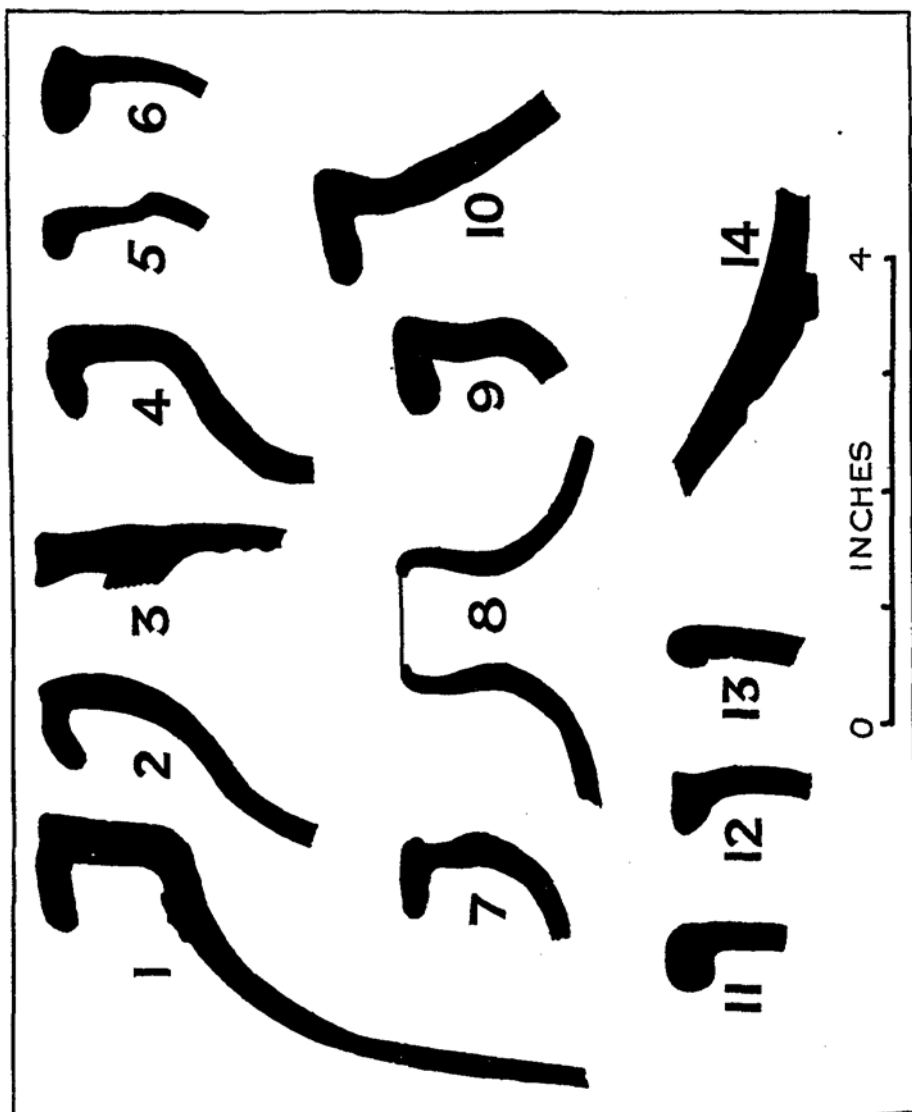
Site II. Outside the north wall of the rectangular building, in the black earth.

Site III. In the trench on the east, near the thicker wall. The writer was unable personally to supervise the excavation of this trench, but was informed that the greater part of the pottery came from the ditch on the north side of the wall, and that there was no difference in type between the pottery from the upper and lower layers of black earth.

¹ *Trans. Essex Arch. Soc.*, Vol. XII, p. 171.



PLAN OF EXCAVATIONS AT TONGE CASTLE.



POTTERY FROM TONGE CASTLE.

1. (Site I.) Cooking Pot Rim : Grey clay, dark smoky grey surface. Inside diam. of rim $13\frac{1}{2}$ ins. Decorated with raised shoulder and vertical ribs with finger impressions. Compare Rayleigh, Plate G.e.
2. (Site I.) Cooking Pot Rim : Clay and surface similar to 1. Burnt black in patches. Inside diam. rim 13 ins.
3. (Site III.) Rim of pitcher : Brick red with grey centre. Remains of green glaze. Traces of handle.
4. (Site III.) Cooking pot rim : Grey clay. Brown surface inside, dark smoky brown outside.
5. (Site I.) Perhaps Rim of Pitcher : Red clay, grey centre. Inside diam. 4 ins.
6. (Site III.) Cooking Pot Rim : Red clay : grey centre.
7. (Site III.) Cooking Pot Rim : Brick red clay.
8. (Site III.) Neck of Costrel : Grey clay. Surface brick red outside, buff inside. Inside diam. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Compare Rayleigh, plate G.g.
9. (Site II.) Cooking Pot Rim : Grey clay as in 1 and 2.
10. (Site II.) Fragment of bowl : Dull red. Finger impressions on rim. Compare Rayleigh Castle, plate G.a.
11. (Site III.) Cooking Pot Rim : Dark brown, grey centre.
12. (Site III.) Cooking Pot Rim : Dark brown.
13. (Site III.) Cooking Pot Rim : Hard black smooth-surfaced ware, free from shells.
14. (Site III, about 40 ft. to the North of the wall, at a depth of 6 ft.) Fragment of La Tène ware first century A.D. : Grey clay free from shell. Surface red inside, black outside. Inside diam. of foot $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins. Compare Nos. 22-25, in the Report of the Society of Antiquaries on the Late Celtic Urn—field at Swarling, Kent. It is unlikely that it has any connection with the existing earthworks, but further excavation might reveal more traces of an early occupation of the site.

The only definite conclusions that can be drawn from the excavations are that the site was inhabited at some time

during the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, and that there is a possibility of an earlier occupation during the first century A.D. Although only a very small part of the area has been explored, enough has been done to show that the site would repay further examination.

Thanks are due to the Rev. H. F. Lord, whose initiative and support made the excavation feasible ; to Mr. C. Wicks, the owner of the land ; and to Mr. T. Wicks, the tenant, who rendered every assistance.

The pottery is now in the possession of Mr. T. Wicks.