

**BECK LEVEN FOOT BLOOMERY**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT**

**NMR no: SD 39 NW 16**

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RCHME Newcastle

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Mark Bowden

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1996

## BECK LEVEN FOOT BLOOMERY

Cumbria  
South Lakeland  
Coniston

NGR: SD 3009 9524

NMR no: SD 39 NW 16

The bloomery mound at Beck Leven Foot was surveyed by Mark Bowden and Keith Blood as part of the RCHME:Furness Project on 15 February and 5 March 1996. The plan, which was produced by electronic and graphical survey methods, was drawn at a scale of 1:500. Profiles across the mound were drawn at 1:250 horizontal and 1:125 vertical scales. The RCHME is grateful to Bruce Hanson of the Brantwood Estate for permission to undertake the survey.

The bloomery is situated on the north bank of the beck about 70m from Coniston Water. It is on the east side of the minor road which follows the lake shore and lies in the extreme south-west corner of the Brantwood Estate.

The mound, which has previously been noted by other commentators (e.g. Collingwood 1901; Fell 1908, 173), is over 1m high; the volume of the mound is estimated to be in the order of 100-150 cubic metres. On the south side are traces of excavations undertaken by T Clare in the 1980s (see below), including an open trench which is eroding. To the west of the mound and against the field wall is a spoilheap of small fragments of slag, 0.8m high, presumably from this trench. Though there is much surface stone on the site there are no structural remains, with the exception of a rectangular stone-built platform, measuring 2.5m by 1.2m and 0.3m high, to the south-east of the mound; this was built by T Clare during an experimental smelting exercise (Bruce Hanson, pers comm). A wooden peg, 2.5m from the southern corner of this platform, presumably also relates to these excavations and experiments. On the south side of the beck, opposite the mound, is a level platform partly covered by water-worn stones, but whether this is related to the bloomery is uncertain. A circular hollow, 0.3m deep, with an adjacent heap of upcast, 0.4m high, lies 15m to the east of the mound; its date and function are uncertain. In the field to the north and east of the bloomery are fugitive traces of narrow ridge-and-furrow, the ridges approximately 1.8m wide. These cultivation remains are cut by the ruts of a track which

crosses the field from a gateway in its eastern wall.

About 100m upstream, in Machell Coppice, are the remains of two stone-built structures or buildings and some other slight remains (SD 39 NW 27) but these are not considered to be associated with the bloomery.

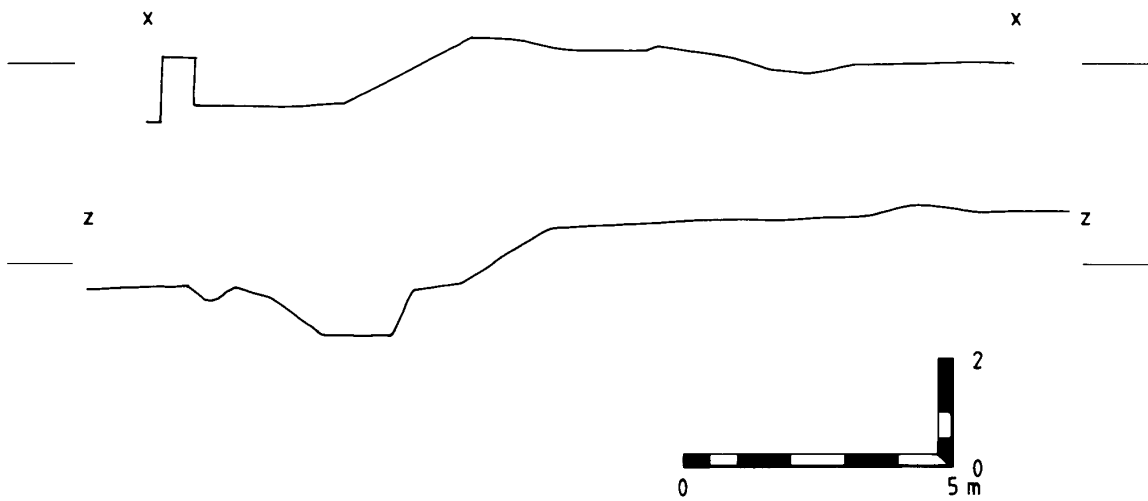
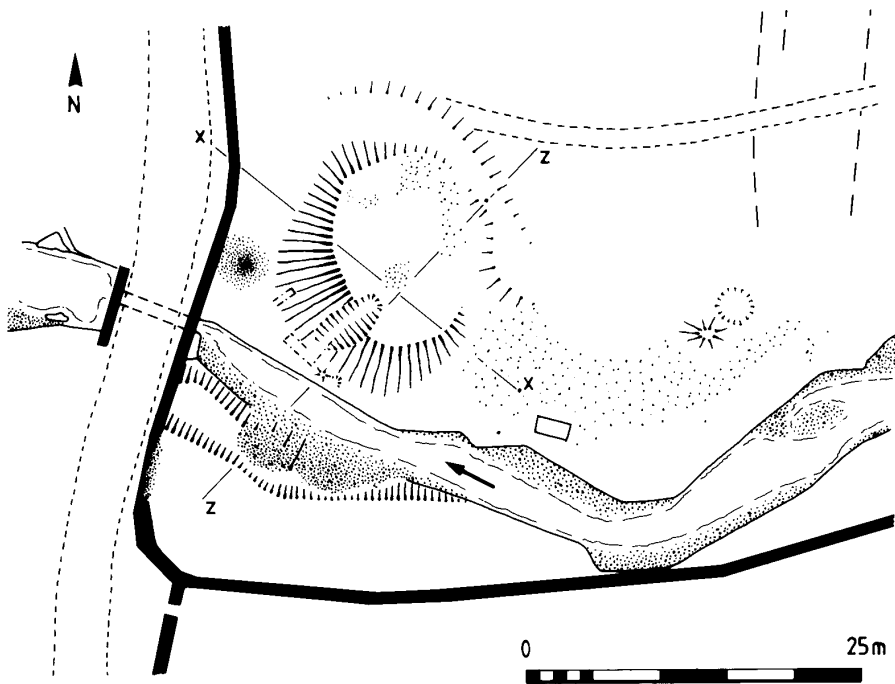
There are a number of pitsteads on the Brantwood Estate and in neighbouring woods. The charcoal supply for the bloomery was, therefore, local. Whether the ore smelted was from a minor local deposit or whether it was boated up the lake from Low Furness is not known. The bloomery is generally considered to be of medieval or later date.

The following remarks about the excavations have been kindly supplied by T Clare in advance of his publication. The trench was not excavated down to the old ground surface as that was both impractical and unnecessary for interpretational purposes. However, it was clear that the bloomery mound was simply a spoil heap of industrial waste and that the associated furnaces or hearths must be elsewhere in the field. No fragments of clay structures were found, suggesting that very simple furnaces or hearths, rather than complex structures, had been used. A magnetometer survey was taken of some 900 sq m. Within the survey area were numerous peaks suggesting many concentrations of iron, and that the whole area had been utilised in the production of iron.

## **References**

Collingwood, W G 1901 The ancient ironworks of Coniston Lake *Trans Hist Soc Lancs and Ches* 53 (1902) 1-22

Fell, A 1908 *The Early Iron Industry of Furness and District* Hume Kitchin Ulverston



Beck Leven Foot plan (1:500) and profiles (1:250 horizontal, 1:125 vertical).  
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