

5th, *Description of the Vitrified Station of Castle Spynie, in Inverness-shire.* By George Anderson, Esq. F. R. S. Edin. and Secretary of the Northern Institution of Inverness. Extract from a Letter to Dr Hibbert, dated October 23, 1823.

You will recollect, perhaps, on going to Ross-shire, that my brother talked of, or pointed out a hill on the left hand side of the road, about nine miles from this town, which he had heard was either a British hill fort or a vitrified station. I examined it to-day, and as vitrified matter did occur in it, I thought (though it will add but little

to your stock of valuable information) some description of their position and quantity might be of use to you, as completing the series of north-country forts.

In the Statistical Account of the Parish (Kiltarlity), you will find it described as a watch-tower, under the name of Castle Spynie, situated two miles east of the present church, and in the line between Craig Phadrick and Dun Phion; but not a word is said of its containing any vitrified appearances. Indeed, I know several persons who were lately at the spot, without suspecting any thing of that sort; and it was only by examining well among the rubbish, and attending to the form and clink of the stones, that I discovered that some of them had been acted upon by fire.

The fort itself is on a detached knoll, rising to the height of about 800 feet above the sea, from a range of gneiss mountains, and incloses a small circular area of about 12 paces in diameter. The entrance was in the south-west corner, and the walls, all of smooth tabular masses of gneiss, extended to the enormous thickness of 10 and even 15 feet. The most singular circumstance connected with this fort that struck me is, that it is surrounded for the space of half a mile on all sides, as at Dun Eyan in Nairnshire, with a series of the most uncommonly rugged and splintery rocky ledges and eminences. These are all of waved gneiss, traversed by large granite veins, but exhibiting internally no signs of contortion or displacement, except sudden transitions from a horizontal to a vertical position of the strata. The outer surface, however, is so sharp, rugged, and torn, and edged with large, loose and threatening masses, that sometimes we mistake them for the fort, and at other times imagine they are cairns or Druidical circles. Indeed in one or two points they have been moved and placed in a line so as to form a barrier or guard to the ridge.

Of the conical knoll of the fort itself, which on the west and south is surrounded by a swampish plain, these same sides are rather precipitous, and accordingly are only guarded by the single strong wall fringing the summit. From the middle of the north side, however, indications may be seen of a second wall; and below it, that is, about 15 paces from the top, a hollow or ditch proceeds encircling the whole of the north-east and eastern sides, and marking distinctly the base of the fortified mount from the adjoining ridges. This ditch is faced without by a breastwork composed of a semicircular line of upright stones, varying from two to five feet in height; and below these again, at the distance of four or five paces, is another ditch four or five feet deep, and about the same breadth, faced without by a mound of earth and stones. This east side, in short, is the most exposed, and it was therefore the most carefully defended. The acclivities of the knoll are strewed all round (except on part of the south and west slopes) with rubbish and loose stones fallen from the wall above; which, though three feet is only now left of its height, from the size and quantity of these loose masses, must have originally risen to a considerable elevation.

It was, however, at the base, and along the line of semicircular stones above mentioned, that I found those of a vitrified character; and very few of them could I see

on any of the acclivities, and none at all on the top. Indeed, the quantity I met with altogether did not exceed a dozen of pieces, none of which was larger than a bull's head, though the vitrification was as complete and puzzling as in any specimens I have yet examined. Had the walls (as in Craig Phadrick, &c.) been arched over the top with burnt matter, considerable quantities might have lain concealed under their ruins; but if such were the case, I think I should have discovered some indications of them, or of their ashes and splinters. None of the large round pieces I saw were scratched or broken on the surface, or appeared to have sustained any great weight, or to have fallen from a considerable distance; neither could I discover any of them in the neighbouring plain or hillocks.

I suspect this long description will be but trifling to you, as it advances in no degree the general question; yet the very small quantity, and the position of the vitrified matters, appear to me to be circumstances of some consequence.

All these curious remains in this quarter I have now, I believe, seen or heard correctly of except Cromal and Dunsgrebin, two mentioned in the "Survey of Moray," and, I suspect, in Williams' book. The former I think is noted only as a *hill fort*. The other, Dunsgrebin, is described as being on the north side of Loch Ness, and as carrying on the communication between Craig Phadrick and Dunardil, which we noticed to be defective.

*Mr Anderson, in a subsequent communication, inclosed the following plan of Castle Spynie, which is appended to his Letter.*

- a, Circular area (12 paces), inclosed within a strong wall.
- b, Pathway and entrance from the south.
- c, Ditch at each end fenced by upright stones.
- d, Slope strewed with fallen portions of the wall, in which the vitrified matter is found.
- e, Second ditch, a little below the other

