

## AN OLD ROAD IN THE LAMMERMUIRS.

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A good deal is known from old maps, diaries and other records about the general course of the main routes followed by traffic in earlier times, while the badness of the roads and the trials undergone by travellers are bywords of social history. Apart, however, from some notes by the late H. R. G. Inglis, F.S.A.Scot.,<sup>4</sup> on five of the more important of the ancient Scottish roads, little attention has been paid to the actual remains that can still be seen on the ground, with the result that these are frequently misunderstood and wrongly identified. For example, more than one set of old tracks in the Cheviots has been marked as "Earthworks" on the Ordnance Survey maps, and much of the body of myth connected with the word "Catrail" has grown up out of the confusion of old roads with

<sup>1</sup> *Antiquity*, 1943; see also in *History of Northumberland*, xv. 30-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1934, p. 399.

<sup>3</sup> Mr C. A. Raleigh Radford and Mr W. E. Griffiths have kindly let me know of a fort on Mynydd y Dref, near Conway, Carnarvonshire, which appears to be in several features similar to those here discussed. It is to be published by the Welsh Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments.

The situation and use of natural crags suggest some affinity in the case of the strong fort on the Mither Tap of Bennachie, Aberdeenshire (W. D. Simpson, *Province of Mar*, 60-1).

The fort on Norman's Law, Fife, is quite different, and the outer rampart on the Royal Commission's plan should be shown as running right round.

<sup>4</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, vol. lviii (1923-24), pp. 203 ff.

linear earthworks. Yet roads of this type are quite common on the moors of the Southern Uplands, sometimes completely derelict and sometimes in occasional use for carting and the movement of stock, and can readily be seen with their tracks running side by side, criss-crossing among themselves, and spreading out or contracting into wider or narrower belts as the lie of the ground dictates. Where they cross level ground or mount a slope directly they are hollowed to a V-shaped section, or have flat bottoms 6 feet or less in width; and where they run along the face of a hillside they assume the form of terraces, generally somewhat embanked on their outer edges. It is the purpose of this paper to ventilate the subject of these roads by describing an example which is reasonably easy of access and which exhibits features common to the whole class.

The road in question crosses the Lammermuir Hills from Long Yester, in East Lothian<sup>1</sup> (545652), by Lammer Law, Crib Law, Tollishill Dod and Addinston Hill to the Leader Water at Wiselawmill (515518), a distance of rather more than nine miles (fig. 1). A modern track, which is fairly well known to walkers and which is alluded to below as "the cart-road," follows its course as far as the shepherd's house at Tollis Hill, but there breaks off, turns into a metalled farm-road, and descends to Carfraemill Inn. Long Yester, however, is only its point of departure from the modern system of highways, and in earlier days the route must pretty certainly have originated somewhere further down-country—most probably at Haddington, as in 1791 the road is alluded to as leading from Lauder to Haddington.<sup>2</sup> This must, however, remain a matter of conjecture, as all the ground in this direction has long been under the plough. In Lauderdale, too, it is natural to suppose that it joined up with the

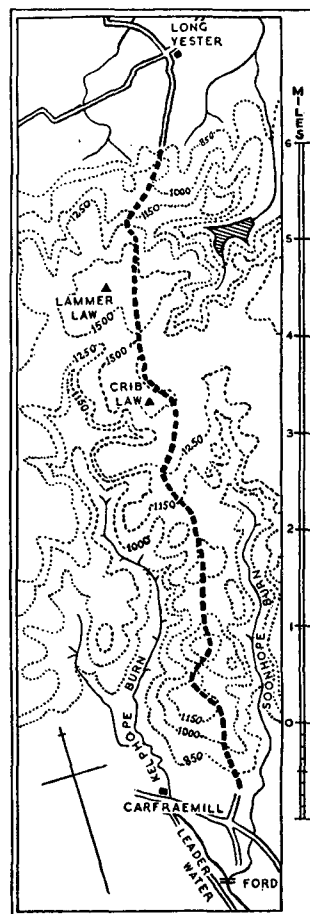


Fig. 1. The road in its relation to local topography.

<sup>1</sup> For topographical details see 6-inch O.S. maps Haddingtonshire (new series), xv. S.W., xv. S.E., xix. N.E. and S.E.; Berwickshire (2nd edition, 1900), vii. N.E., vii. S.E., xiii. N.E., xiii. S.E. Six-figure map-references are to the National Grid, large square 36, as shown on the 1-inch O.S. map of Scotland, "Popular" Edition, sheet 74. The serial numbers of air photographs covering the road are as follows: 106G/Scot/UK9; 5207, 5208, 7207, 7208, 7326, 7327. 106G/Scot/UK15; 5052, 5053, 5190, 5191, 5346, 5347, 7051, 7052, 7053. 541/A/472; 3084, 3085, 3200, 3201, 4083, 4084.

<sup>2</sup> *Statistical Account*, vol. i. p. 77.

important trunk-road that followed the line of Dere Street from Edinburgh to Lauder and the South.

The first feature of the road that calls for remark is the primitive character of its lay-out. It is, in fact, not laid out at all, but is simply a "ridgeway" brought into being by traffic which sought and kept to the highest available ground in order to avoid a particular set of hazards—woods, streams, and sharp variations of grade—with which contemporary society was unable to cope. It is thus in the sharpest contrast with a Roman road, with its road-mound, terrace, or cutting as the case may be, and its course usually laid out in a succession of "straights" and with due regard to gradient. Here no sign of construction appears from end to end, apart from some superficial improvement of the cart-road, and it is clear that those who first travelled this way simply set their course along a chain of summits with their connecting cols and ridges, facing the drawbacks of long steep ascents and undrained mossy levels. Thus Lammer Law and its northern shoulder, Threep Law, provide a way for turning the chasm of the Sting Bank Burn; and a narrow neck—the most crucial section of the route—is so placed as to carry the road on between the deep and very steep gullies at the heads of the Hopes Water and the Kelphope Burn. Again, Crib Law and the ridge that runs southwards from it to Addinston Hill provide a way by which the road can avoid the parallel valleys of the Kelphope and Soonhope Burns and the heads of their side-streams; while a point of slightly rising ground between the Leader Water and the foot of the Cleekhimin Burn was evidently made use of to avoid involvement in wet and treacherous haugh-land.

Properly speaking, the study of the road as an antiquity can only begin at the quarry on the top of Brown Rig (538636), as from Long Yester to this point it has been thoroughly modernised. Here, however, two deeply hollowed tracks can be seen cutting through the summit of the Rig, being themselves overridden by the cart-road; one of these is 5 feet deep by 4 feet wide at the bottom. The choice of this course over the top of Brown Rig is typical of roads of this class, an ascent of a quarter of a mile at a grade of more than 1 in 10, with a subsequent drop, being preferred to a detour of about twice that length at an even grade of about 1 in 31, but bordering on some swampy ground. A succeeding marshy belt is crossed as quickly as possible by a single flat-bottomed track, and the road then begins to climb the fairly steep slope at the base of Threep Law—itself, as has been said, a northern shoulder of Lammer Law—which separates the valleys of the Harelaw and Blinkbonny Burns. The tracks, three in number at the outset and multiplying as they mount the slope, are slightly hollowed, and can readily be traced through the heather on account of the growth of grass that marks their lines. Having thus increased in number and opened out where the hillside is easy and unobstructed, they

are forced to draw together again before reaching the 1250-foot contour, as the breadth of the available space is here reduced between the head of a corrie on the east and the top of the ridge to the west; and at the point where the cart-road bends towards the south-south-east to turn the corrie, the wide belt of tracks has shrunk away to almost nothing. Beyond this point, however, another expanse of open hillside is reached, and the tracks at once take advantage of this to open out once more in a characteristic

manner (fig. 2). At least eleven tracks can be counted on this upper part of Threep Law, expanding over a belt of ground which is up to 150 yards in breadth, but not all of these are shown in fig. 2 as this has been traced from an air photograph on which some of the tracks are invisible. The steepness of the slope, which rises at 1 in 5 direct from the 1250-foot to the 1500-foot contour, no doubt encouraged the traffic to swing out in extended curves in order to reduce the gradient, a feature very commonly observed on roads of this kind; and it will be seen from fig. 2 that three of the tracks, which disappear at the 1400-foot contour, made an even wider detour by the western flank of the shoulder. These tracks are not all contemporary or of similar size and appearance; they override and intersect one another as varying courses have been favoured from time to time, and the V-shaped section that most, though not all, of them show suggests secondary erosion by running water. This process could

in fact be seen at work on the cart-road, at 530626, where in May 1949 a roadside runnel only 3 feet wide at the top had been cut to a depth of 4 feet by recent rains. Another characteristic feature of this section of the road is the wreck of a transverse earthwork 40 yards long, about half-way up the hill-face; it is a simple ditch and bank, almost obliterated by the tracks that override it and cut off its ends, and may once have been a land-boundary.

Above the 1500-foot contour the summit-ridge of Threep Law begins to merge into a gently swelling plateau which forms the summit of Lammer Law; and here the road keeps east of the highest ground, along the slope that overlooks the Sting Bank Burn, a tributary of the Hopes Water. In this section, again, at least twelve tracks have been hollowed or terraced out in a belt of ground about 150 yards wide, though only three or four appear in the air photograph on which fig. 2 is based. These tracks lie

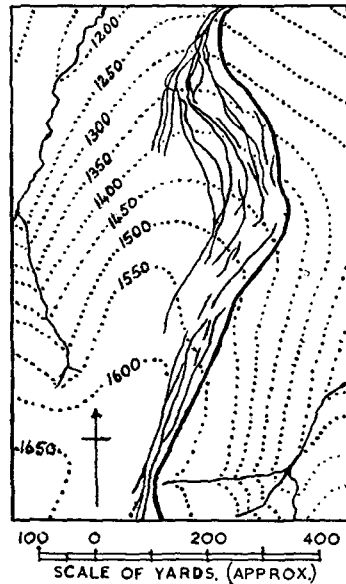


Fig. 2. The belt of tracks mounting Threep Law.

immediately above, or in places are impinged upon by, the cart-road, and one of them, which runs for a short distance on its lower side, is old enough to have been cut right through by the head of a cleuch which is eating its way back into the hillside. Three of the tracks seem to be wide enough for draught, but three others are now only traceable by patches of grass, or more often of blaeberry, which mark faint lines through the heather. When the road reaches the flatter ground on the summit-area of the Law, the numerous subsidiary tracks disappear in the peat—another characteristic feature, as these hollowed roads can always be most easily traced on steep slopes or on hard, well-drained ground. The highest part of the road lies east-north-east of the summit of Lammer Law, where it tops the 1600-foot contour for a short distance.

For the ensuing 800 yards the course of the road is downwards, as it now descends to the neck mentioned above, which carries it between the heads of two closely approaching cleuchs—on the east Harley Grain, a branch of the Hopes Water, and on the west the Lammerlaw Burn, part of the headwaters of the Kelphope Burn and so tributary to the Leader. There is little to remark on here except the convergence of another set of tracks with those of the main route in the stretch of 300 yards immediately north of the neck. These tracks have crossed Lammer Law from west of north, reaching the summit by a shoulder which separates the Blink-bonny and Easter Burns; their point of origin is evidently somewhere near Kidlaw, and they would thus seem to have been made by traffic from the direction of Saltoun rather than from that of Haddington. At different points they number two, three, or four, and all seem wide enough for draught; one of them, in fact, is still in use from Lammer Law northwards, as a modern cart-track leads off from it in the direction of Bleak Law near the summit-cairn.

The neck (526609) at which the road now arrives lies just below the 1500-foot contour and is rather marshy. At some period it has been spanned by an earthwork of markedly sinuous alignment, but to-day much of the central and eastern parts of this has been worn away by traffic; what remains is a stretch of 165 yards, extending from the steep cleuch at the head of the Lammerlaw Burn to a point 16 yards west of the fence that runs parallel with the road, together with a short fragment of the eastern end, on the cleuch falling to the head of the Hopes Burn. Where best preserved the work consists of a bank with a ditch on either side, and measures 26 feet in overall breadth; near the centre of the neck, however, the ditches are largely filled up and the bank correspondingly eroded, and 55 yards west of the cart-road, which itself overrides the whole work, there is a gap 17 yards wide through which the older tracks passed. The indications suggest that the earthwork is older than the tracks, especially as its destruction east of the fence seems to have been brought

about not only by surface drainage—which has played its part in the process—but also in part by one of the tracks of the road, which has evidently passed this way, somewhat to the east of the rest. The damage may also have been increased if, as the evidence suggests, a branch-road left the main route here and ran east-south-east past the head of the Soonhope Burn—clear traces of this branch-road are to be seen at 527607, where a gap appears to have been purposely left for its passage through a less ancient-looking cross-dyke which spans the neck between the Soonhope and Hopes Burns. The earthwork on the neck is typical of works of this class, which are very common in the Cheviots, both by reason of its irregular alignment and also of the manner in which it rests at either end on the head of a cleuch—as if intended to eke out natural boundary-marks across a featureless stretch of ground. The western portion, for as far as it is readily visible, has been adopted as the county march; but as this has evidently been done at some date subsequent to the obliteration of the eastern portion, and as, moreover, the march thereafter runs off on a different course, this cannot have been the earthwork's original purpose.

On the eastern face of Crib Law, where the road again rises to an elevation of close on 1600 feet, there are three, or in places four, tracks terraced along the slope. The cart-road occupies one or another of these for considerable stretches, and as this shows little sign of purposeful construction it may virtually be said that the old system is here still in use. It is interesting to see that here, as on Threep Law, the precipitous heads of the gullies known as Criblaw Scars have eaten their way back into the belt of tracks—at the north-western scar the cart-road has been deflected, while the terraced track in which it had previously been running has been carried away for many feet, and at the south-eastern scar the lowermost two out of the total of five tracks now cross empty air, while the third, or central, track has had to be deflected.

After passing Criblaw Scars the road descends from Crib Law on a curving course—swinging south and then south-south-west to avoid the head of Crib Cleuch. Its general gradient here is about 1 in 10, and it consists of five hollow tracks in a belt 55 yards in width, all to the east of the cart-road. These provide an excellent example of the unmade moorland road, and it is worth noting that one, which shortly takes the form of a terrace, has attained a width of no less than 25 feet—a feature which might well prove deceptive on a route where a Roman road was being looked for. Below the 1400-foot contour (528593) the slope of the ground becomes gentler, and the road shortly passes a ditch-and-bank earthwork of moderate proportions—evidently a land-boundary or head-dyke. Some at least of the tracks of the road break through, and are consequently of later date than, the dyke, though a gap 15 yards in breadth,

through which run some rather lightly marked tracks, may have been left on purpose for the passage of traffic.

For more than a quarter of a mile below this dyke the slope is gentle and the ground not naturally well drained. The tracks here run mainly to the east of the cart-road and are not very clearly marked. Then, after passing through another turf-dyke, slighter and more wasted than the first, they change over to the west side of the cart-road and again become plain as they descend a steeper and drier slope to the neck, called Windy Law, that separates Hog Sike, on the west, from some flattish ground draining south-eastwards to the Soonhope Burn. On this slope the tracks number three, and occupy a strip of ground about 30 yards wide; two of them are deep and all have no doubt been used for draught. The neck itself being flat and the ground mossy, these tracks are, as usual, lost at the bottom of the slope, only one appearing to run on towards the house of Tollishill; air photographs show, however, that the main route bore to the south across what is now a moss, and shortly swung south-south-east to turn the head of Long Cleuch. This section, some 300 yards long, is quite invisible on the ground, but on a slight rise between Long and Cozie Cleuchs (524583), one wide, shallow track can be picked up together with fragments of some minor ones. From this point onwards the road runs due south along the ridge that separates the Soonhope and Kelphope valleys. On even ground it seems to have consisted of a flat-bottomed track about 12 feet wide and one or two narrower ones, perhaps not used for draught. Faint traces are visible on the ground at the head of Long Cleuch, and more definite ones at the two heads of Dod Cleuch. North-east of Tollishill Dod, two tracks which are evidently outliers from the principal route can be seen crossing a fan of small watercourses which drain towards the Soonhope Burn; these have been much wasted and obscured by moisture, rushes and moss, and their appearance suggests a long period of disuse. Air photographs add some further traces at a number of intermediate points.

At the head of the northern branch of Dod Cleuch (525573), where the road is represented by several hollow tracks twisting in a confused manner to cross a waterlogged belt, it enters the enclosed but now derelict lands of what was once the farm of Dod House, the ruined steading of which (526566) is now reconstructed as a sheepfold. The bank and ditch of the enclosure override the tracks, which can thus never have been used since their construction (*infra*); it is noticeable too that the tracks are not deflected to make use of a roadway, from 24 feet to 30 feet wide between well-made turf-dykes, which has been laid out through the centre of the farm-lands for a distance of nearly 1100 yards, but that they can be traced—with difficulty on the ground and more clearly on air photographs—running parallel with the dyked roadway and from 100 yards to

150 yards to the west of it. They are eventually lost altogether some 200 yards south-west of the ruined steading, at the edge of an expanse of mossy ground, which lies across the direct southwards line. From this point the road no doubt bore west of south, to turn the moss, as it reappears at about 522560 slanting up the lower slopes of Hill 1306 on a south-south-easterly course which carries it, after a further swing to south and then to south-west, over the shoulder of this hill on approximately the course of the "foot-path" marked on the 6-inch O.S. map. On the north-eastern slope of the hill the road consists of a main terraced track up to 30 feet wide with several smaller subsidiaries. It seems to have been joined hereabouts by a branch coming from the direction of Dod House; but this cannot have carried any great volume of traffic, as the two hollow tracks by which it leaves the dyked roadway rapidly disappear in the moss and their further line can only be detected as a grass-mark. Higher up on Hill 1306 the tracks decrease in number until only one flat-bottomed hollow 12 feet wide is left, with a narrower track which seems to be still in use; these in turn become less clearly marked as they proceed, and beyond 520549, where some tracks are visible just before the road enters the enclosed fields of Addinston, all traces disappear. It is clear enough, however, that the farm road that now runs on through the cultivated land is simply a modern version of the final section of the road.

South of the highway from Edinburgh to Kelso, a footpath—once evidently hedged throughout on both sides, although most of the western bank has been ploughed away—continues the same line, along the tongue of raised ground of which mention has already been made. It leads to the ruined house of Farmfoot, near the junction of the Cleekhimin Burn with the Leader Water, and from the house the 6-inch map marks a track, now destroyed by floods, running on to a ford on the Leader at Wiselawmill (515518).

It remains to consider the road's probable age, for which unfortunately little evidence can be found. In the first place, the lay-out of the road is so thoroughly primitive that its origin might well be supposed to go back to very early times. A mediæval date might be suggested, for example, on the analogy of the Wheel Causeway, which to-day shows similar features, and which seems to have been used by Edward I for his journey from Jedburgh to Carlisle in 1298.<sup>1</sup> Again, hollow tracks can be still seen crossing the Border in Roxburghshire at more than one of the points noted in records of the sixteenth century. Nor would an early date be inherently unlikely, as "Aldenistoun" (Addinston) and "Todlaw" (perhaps Dod Law) are mentioned in a charter of 1222, and "Aldeniston" again, with "Tolchus" (presumably Tollis), in 1252,<sup>2</sup> while Kelhope is on record

<sup>1</sup> Gough, *Itinerary of King Edward the First*, vol. ii. p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> *Lib. de Dryburgh*, No. 84, p. 62, and No. 297, p. 225.



as early as 1613,<sup>1</sup> and the existence of one or more farms at Tollis Hill in the middle of the seventeenth century is implied by the tradition of the "Tollis Hill Bannock," which seems to be based on fact.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the tracks seen to-day on the Wheel Causeway and at the Border crossings need not necessarily be those made respectively in the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, as a more or less heavy traffic of droved animals is likely to have used any of these routes in more recent times. Actually the earliest evidence for the road's existence is given by an account of the parish of Haddington written in 1726,<sup>3</sup> in which the town of Haddington is said to be twelve miles from Lauder—with the implication that a direct route existed between the two places. Again, Roy's map of Scotland, which was made between 1747 and 1755, shows a short length of road descending from the east flank of Lammer Law to Long Yester; and the legend "from Lawder," which accompanies it, proves that the absence of any southward extension is due to a draughtsman's oversight. Sir Robert Sibbald, in his "Description of East-Lothian,"<sup>4</sup> which was presumably written early in the eighteenth century, states that, from one end of the county to the other, "there is no passage for Draughts" except on the east coast by Cockburnspath, "at the Myln know in the middle," *i.e.* from Danskine to the Whiteadder, and at Soutra, "and all thir three passages very uneasy"; but his omission of the Lammer Law route from this list almost certainly implies that it existed in his time but was unfit "for Draughts," and not that it first came into being between, say, 1722, the date of his death, and 1726, when, as has been said, its existence may safely be inferred.

There remain the physical features of the road itself, but these unfortunately add nothing. The rate at which the heads of the cleuchs may be supposed to be eating backwards into the road is quite impossible to estimate and may be very irregular; the enclosures at Dod House, which provide a terminal date for the southern portion of the road, may not have been made before the second quarter of the nineteenth century;<sup>5</sup> while the evidence of the turf-dykes that cross the road is entirely indefinite. We are thus left with proof that the road goes back to the first quarter of the eighteenth century, and a presumption, though no more than a presumption, in favour of some considerably earlier date.

In conclusion I wish to express my thanks to Mr C. S. T. Calder, A.R.I.A.S., F.S.A.Scot., for his help in the preparation of the drawings.

<sup>1</sup> *Retours* as quoted by Allen, *A History of Channelkirk*, p. 435.

<sup>2</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, vol. xxxii (1897-98), pp. 195 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Macfarlane, *Geographical Collections Relating to Scotland, etc.* (Sc. Hist. Soc.), i. p. 376.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iii. pp. 110 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Mr T. Bennett, Nether Howden, stated that in 1810, when his grandfather first came to the district, there were no fences in Lauderdale though much of the upland country was under unenclosed cultivation. In 1794, however, five hundred acres were, in fact, enclosed in Channelkirk parish alone (*Statistical Account*, vol. xiii. p. 391).