

## XIII.

## SIX ROMAN CAMPS NEAR THE ANTONINE WALL.

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## INTRODUCTION.

In recent years, Dr J. K. St Joseph, Curator in Aerial Photography, University of Cambridge, has recorded numerous Roman structures which were observed chiefly in the form of crop-markings during his aerial reconnaissances.<sup>1</sup> The purposes of this paper<sup>2</sup> are to describe the locations and characteristics of six of the newly discovered camps and to put forward suggestions regarding their possible dates and functions. Further investigations have been carried out at these places, mainly during the preparation of the Inventory of the County of Stirling by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments (Scotland). In the course of these, additional information has been obtained both from photographs of the National Survey and by fieldwork.

## I. FOUR CAMPS TO THE SOUTH OF THE ANTONINE WALL.

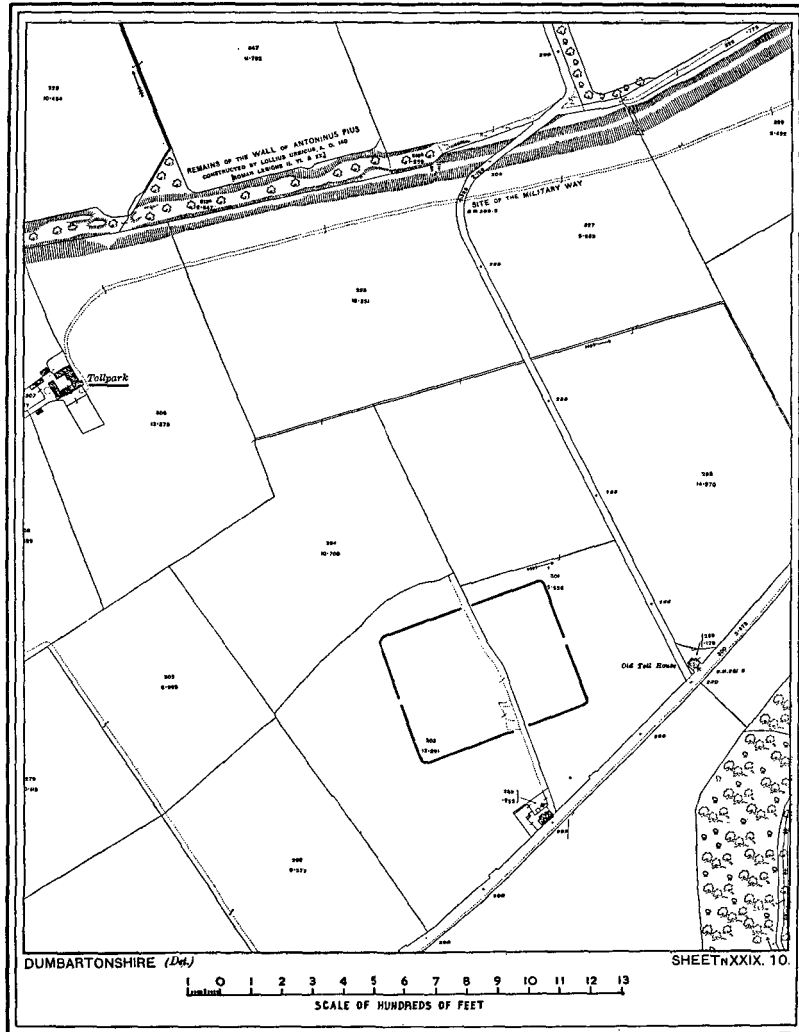
1. *Tollpark* (fig. 1). This camp is situated on a low ridge at a distance of a quarter of a mile S. of the wall at a point about half-way between the forts at Westerwood and Castle Cary (NS/778774). The site is crossed by a dry-stone dyke accompanied by a farm track. The whole camp has been recorded by Dr St Joseph in the form of crop-markings representing the course of the ditch. Entrance gaps can be distinguished at points about half-way along the shorter sides, but the field boundary and the track have presumably obscured those in the longer sides. No traces of this camp appear on the ground, and the soil is such that the ditch could not be located readily with a solid probe. The plan has therefore been drawn entirely from Dr St Joseph's photographs. It shows a rectangular camp which measures about 540 ft. by about 420 ft. within the ditch and occupies an area of about 5.2 acres.

2. *Milnquarter* (fig. 2). This camp is situated on gently sloping ground on the farm of Milnquarter, near Bonnybridge, at a point a little over one mile WSW. of the fort Rough Castle and a quarter of a mile S. of the

<sup>1</sup> *J.R.S.*, xli (1951), 56 ff.; *ibid.*, xlv (1955), 85 ff.

<sup>2</sup> My thanks are due to Dr St Joseph for generous permission to embody some of the results of his work in this account, and to the Commissioners for allowing certain unpublished material to be used.

Wall (NS/825794). When Dr St Joseph flew over the site the state of the crops was such that he was able to record only the crop-marking of that part of the ditch of the camp which lay in the field SE. of the railway



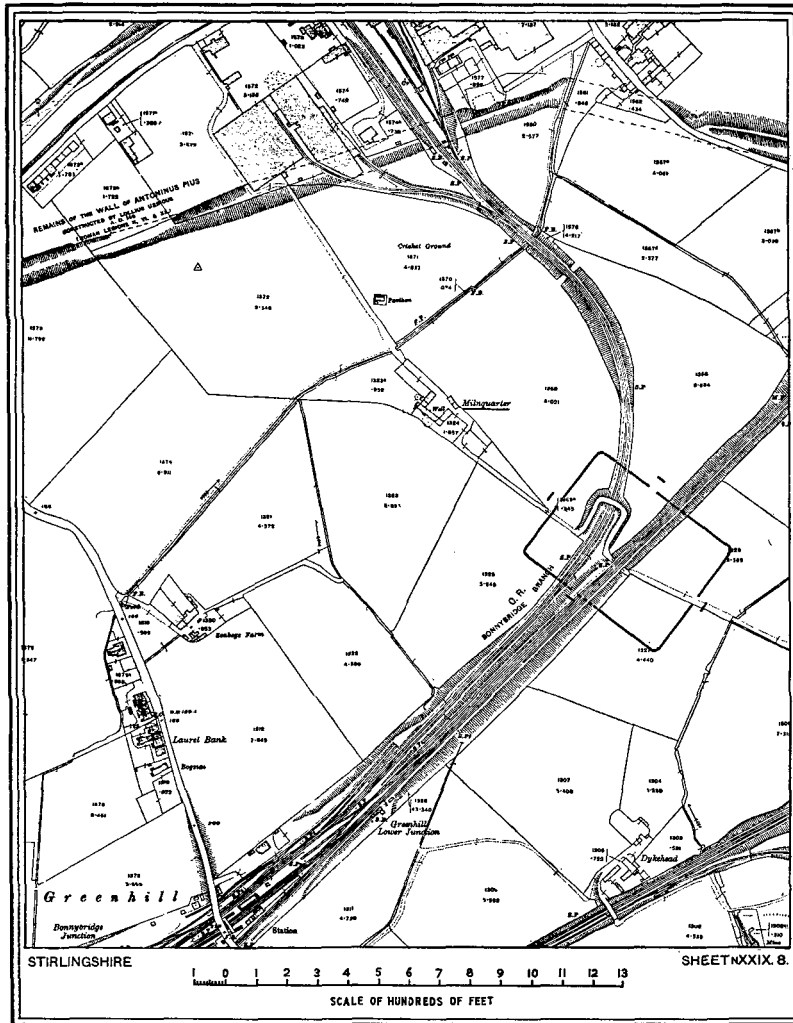
[Based on the Ordnance Survey with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

Fig. 1. Tollpark.

embankment and NE. of a farm track—that is, the E. angle of the camp together with a stretch of each of the adjacent sides. Photographs of the site taken in a different year,<sup>1</sup> however, show a similar portion in the field

<sup>1</sup> CPE/SCOT/UK/256, 5331-2.

on the other side of the farm track—the S. angle and its adjacent sides. It was thus possible to distinguish the course of most of the SE. half of the ditch, but no sign of the NW. half appeared on any photographs, and there

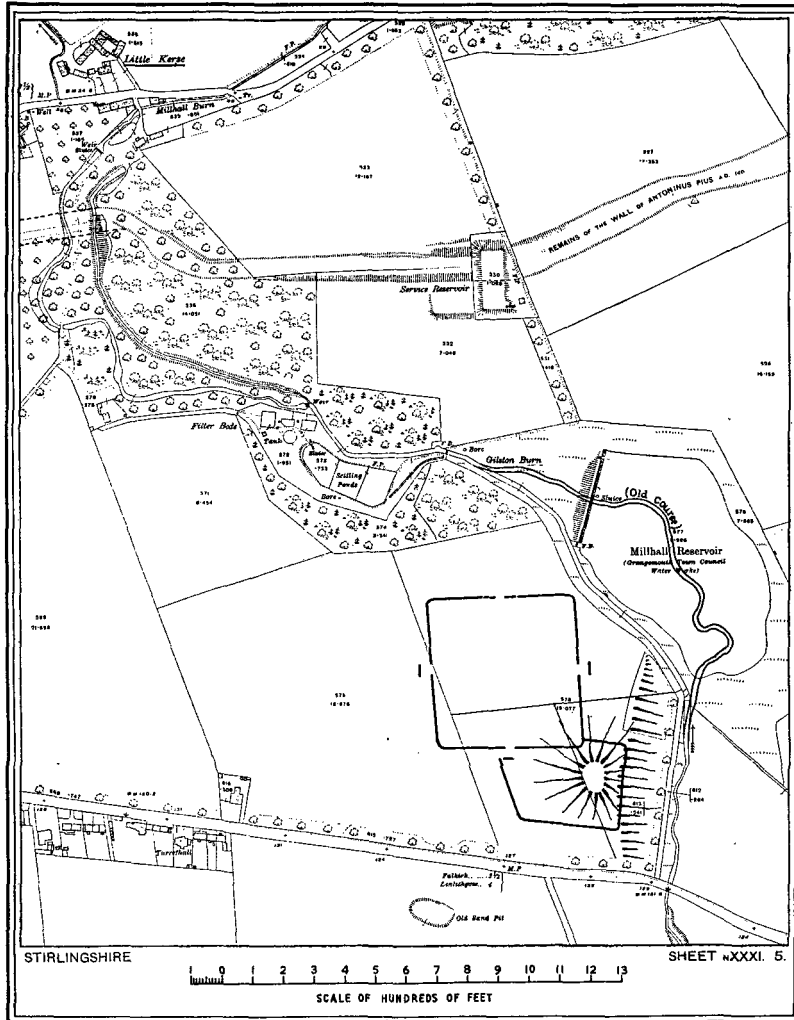


[Based on the Ordnance Survey with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

Fig. 2. Milnquarter.

is no trace of the camp on the ground. The soil, however, proved suitable for the ditch to be located with a solid probe. The lines indicated by the crop-markings were thus located, and it was then possible to pick up their extensions N. of the railway. The remaining part of the NE. side of the camp,

with entrance and *tutulus*: the N. angle: the NW. side with entrance and *tutulus* and the W. angle were all established without difficulty. It also



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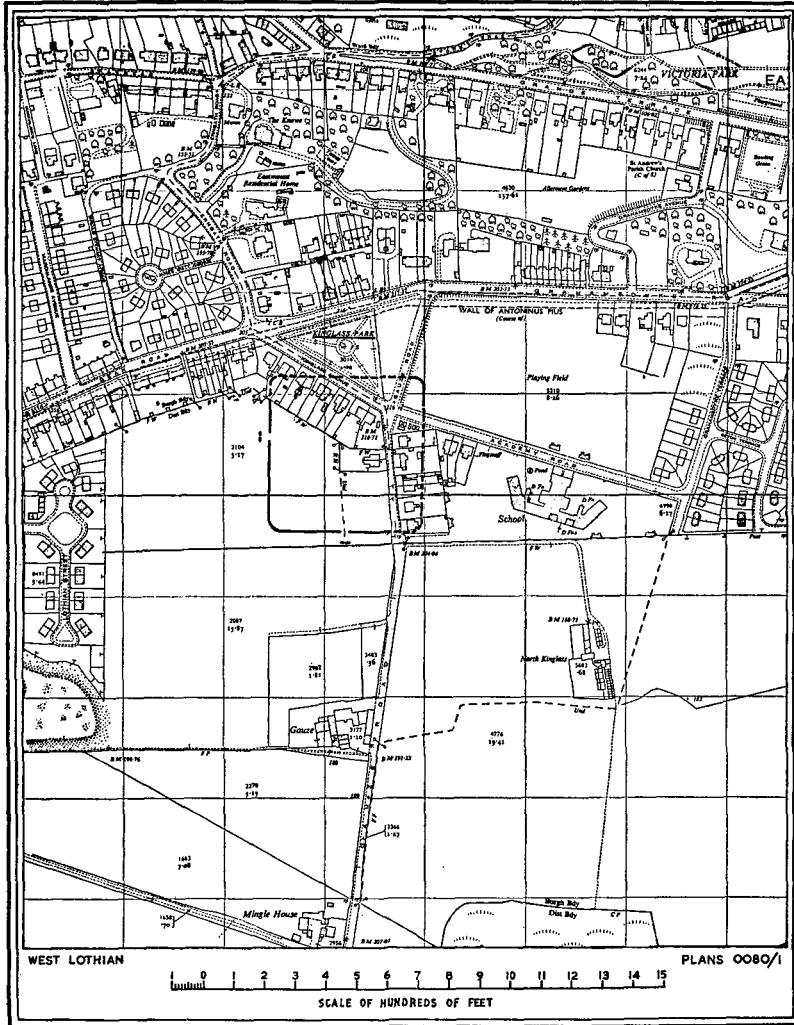
Fig. 3. Little Kerse, Polmont.

proved possible to locate the SE. entrance, with *tutulus*, at the point where, as at Tollpark, the farm track crossed the line of the defences.

The camp measures 540 ft. by 420 ft. within the ditch, and occupies an area of 5.2 acres.

3. *Little Kerse, Polmont* (fig. 3). This camp is situated half a mile E. of

Polmont on the farm of Little Kerse, immediately W. of that part of the valley of the Gilston Burn which is now filled by the Millhall Reservoir



[Based on the Ordnance Survey with the sanction of the Controller H.M. Stationery Office.

Fig. 4. Kinglass Park.

(NS/943788). The outline of almost the entire camp appeared on various photographs taken by Dr St Joseph.<sup>1</sup> These showed the E., S. and W. sides of a rectangular structure, each side furnished with an entrance and

<sup>1</sup> Dr St Joseph has recorded the SW. angle and parts of the S. and W. sides of a camp on the opposite side of the Reservoir, but no trace of this could be detected with the probe. *J.R.S.*, xli (1951), 62.

*tutulus*, but the central part of the N. side was lost in a spreading dark patch. In addition to the rectangular camp, what appeared to be an annexe could be distinguished off the SW. angle.

No trace of the camp remains on the surface, but here again the ditches were picked up by a probe and the exact position of the camp was plotted on the ground. In the middle of the N. side, the dark patch that had obscured the position of the entrance when the photographs were taken was found to be due to the presence there of a broad, shallow depression in which the soil was too uniformly soft for the silt of the ditch to be distinguishable from the surrounding earth with any certainty.

The annexe was found to encompass a knoll that rises some 25 ft. above the general level of the surrounding land. The indications of the limits of the annexe were fragmentary on the aerial photographs, but what signs there were sufficed to guide the probe, so that the whole perimeter was traced. The annexe appeared to have no other entrance than that near the S. gateway of the camp, though this cannot be stated as a certainty.

The inclusion of the knoll within an annexe to the camp seems at first sight peculiar, as there is plenty of level ground nearby upon which the camp could have been constructed well clear of higher ground. A possible explanation may be offered. It has been observed that, whilst most of the Antonine Wall was built of turf, the part of it lying E. of Watling Lodge was of clay, or clay and earth. This, it has been suggested, was apparently done because the countryside through which the eastern stretch ran was heavily wooded in Roman times, and good turf was therefore comparatively difficult to obtain.<sup>1</sup> If this was so, then it might have been that the ground in this vicinity would have been submerged in trees, and so isolated; and that therefore it was necessary to attach a piece of rising ground from which to observe and perhaps to signal.

Disregarding the annexe, the camp measures 500 ft. by 470 ft. within the ditch, an area of 5.4 acres.

4. *Kinglass Park* (fig. 4). This camp is now almost entirely submerged beneath buildings. It lies mostly on what were, until recently, parts of the lands of Gauze Farm on the southern outskirts of Bo'ness (NT/003810). When Dr St Joseph flew over the site in 1949 he observed the crop-mark of much of the S. side of the camp and the SW. angle. The W. side coincided with the division between two crops, and was consequently indistinguishable, but what might have been a *tutulus* could be seen in the field to the W. of the boundary. On visiting the site in February 1955, it was found that the land on which the crop-markings had been seen had been taken over for the building of a school, and that the foundations of the main school buildings occupied the site of the supposed western entrance and *tutulus*. It was possible, however, to establish with the probe the line of the W. sector of the

<sup>1</sup> Macdonald, G., *The Roman Wall in Scotland* (1934), p. 87.

ditch where it approached the wall bounding the houses lying in the NW. part of the camp, and this point, together with the crop-markings, allowed much of the W. side and almost all the S. side of the camp to be plotted on to the map. The NE. angle was located by probing in a school playing-field, and parts of the E. side were similarly found in gardens behind a row of houses. It was thus possible to get a tolerable plan of the camp, which was found to measure about 490 ft. square internally, an area of about 5.5 acres.

## DISCUSSION.

The four camps described form two pairs (fig. 5). The more westerly, Tollpark and Milnquarter, are about the same size—5.2 acres—and lie about 5,500 yds. apart on a line parallel to and about a quarter of a mile S. of the Wall. The other pair, the more easterly, are also similar in size—

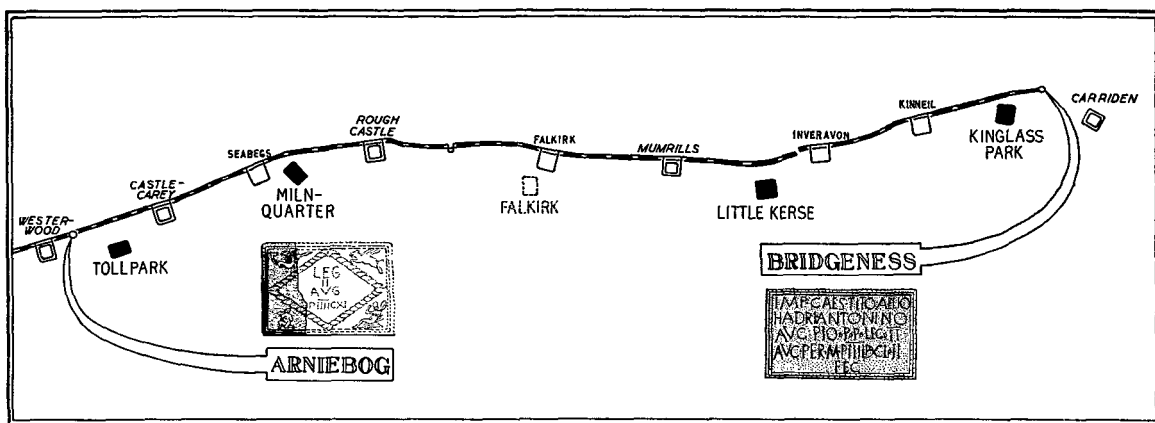


Fig. 5.

5.4 and 5.5 acres respectively—and in shape, being more inclined to the square than the other two. They lie about 7,600 yds. apart: but while the Little Kerse camp, like the western pair, lies a quarter of a mile S. of the Wall, that at Kinglass Park is much closer. This may be accounted for by the lie of the land, for S. of the E. extremity of the Wall the land slopes away to a broad valley, and to avoid losing too much height it would be necessary to place the camp much closer to the Wall.

All the four camps are apparently constructed in the manner of temporary works, with an earthen rampart and a single ditch.

No evidence exists to show at what period the camps were built, or for what purpose they were used. It would be difficult, however, to avoid speculation on the possibility that they might refer in some way to the

building of the Wall, as has been suggested by Dr St Joseph. The disposition of the camps urges a more detailed examination of such an hypothesis, while the inscription on the Bridgeness distance-slab does nothing to negative the possibility. It has been noted that the camps at Kinglass Park and Little Kerse lie about 7,600 yds. apart, and it is well known that the Bridgeness slab records the construction of a length of Wall 7,624 yds. in extent.<sup>1</sup> If the stretch of Wall referred to on the slab was that between Bridgeness and the River Avon, then it is at least possible that the men of the Second Legion who did this work built the Kinglass Park camp as their base.

It is possible that another temporary camp of this kind, not yet discovered, may have lain near Falkirk, and if so, then the five camps, spaced at reasonably equal intervals, might represent some of the bases used by the builders of the easternmost sections of the Wall.

Substance might be added to this suggestion if the stone found at Arniebog was in fact, as has been suggested, a distance-slab.<sup>2</sup>

## II. TWO CAMPS TO THE NORTH OF THE ANTONINE WALL.

1. *East Carmuir*s (fig. 6). This camp, which is situated 700 yds. W. of East Carmuir's farmhouse (NS/858806), was seen in the form of a crop-marking by Dr St Joseph in 1949. The site was traversed by a field-boundary, and the crop W. of this was in a better state for showing the marks of the ditch than was its neighbour. In the W. field the photographs show the line of the whole of the W. side of the camp, including an entrance with *tutulus*, the NW. and SW. angles, and parts of the N. and S. sides. The entrance and *tutulus* on the N. side are visible, while those in the S. side can just be inferred. The N. arc of the NE. angle of the camp can be seen in the field E. of the boundary, and so a plan of the camp can be made. It measures internally 530 ft. by 420 ft., an area of 5.1 acres, and is thus very similar in size to the camps at Tollpark and Milnquarter. If these were, as has been suggested, of Antonine date, then the East Carmuir's camp may belong to the same period and may possibly be related to the Antonine reconstruction at Camelon.

Since the photographic record of this camp was made, the whole of the site has been covered with houses.

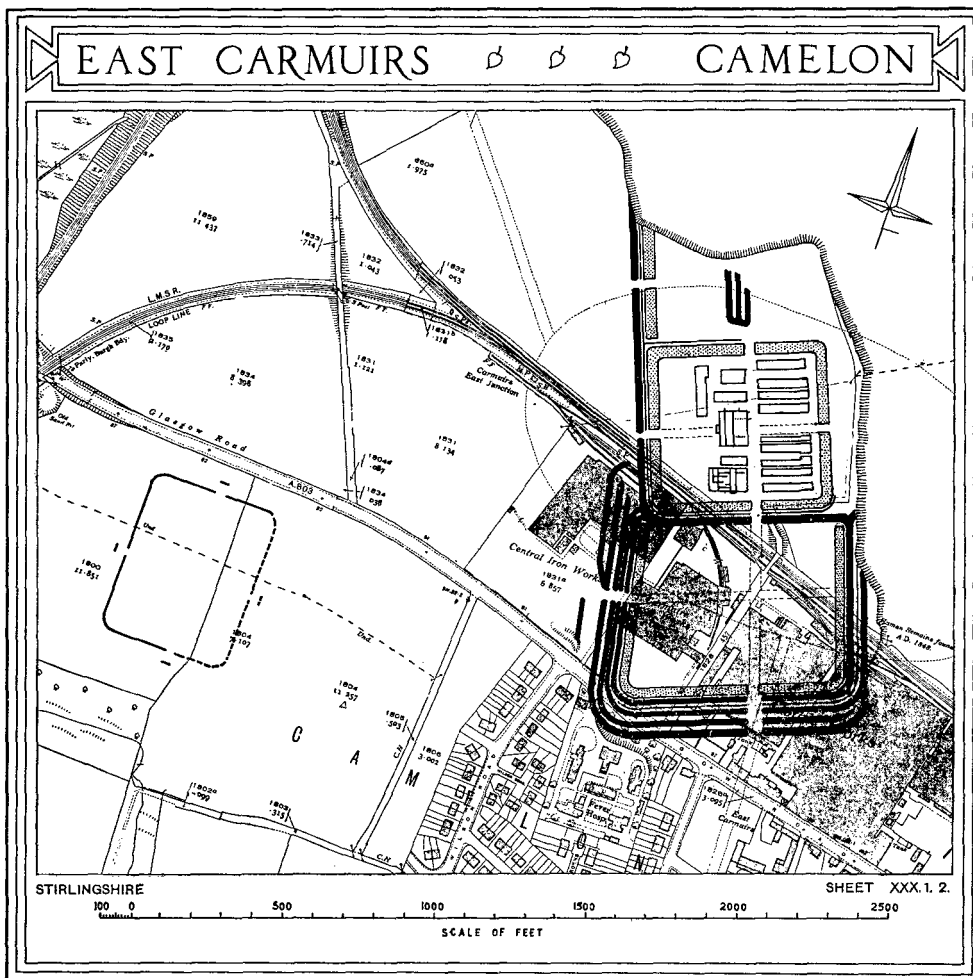
2. *Lochlands* (fig. 7). This camp is situated on level ground in a bend of the River Carron, S. of Larbert (NS/856817). Parts of the ditches of the camp, including the E., W. and S. angles, were seen as crop-markings by Dr St Joseph in 1949. An entrance with *tutulus* appeared in the stretch of the NW. side adjacent to the W. angle. The N. angle, and adjacent stretches of the NW. and NE. sides, do not appear on any photographs, nor could they

<sup>1</sup> Macdonald, G., *op. cit.*, p. 365.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.



be satisfactorily located with the probe. No trace of the camp remains on the surface, but the parts of the ditch that appear as crop-markings were easily located by probing, as was also a considerable stretch of the SE. side which runs through waste ground beside the railway embankment. The



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Fig. 6. East Carmuir.

SE. side was thus traced all the way from the E. angle down to the embankment, with the exception of a short stretch about half-way along it where a mound of builders' debris overlies the line of the ditch. At a point close to the railway embankment a causeway about 30 ft. in width was found in the otherwise uninterrupted ditch. When plotted on to the map this

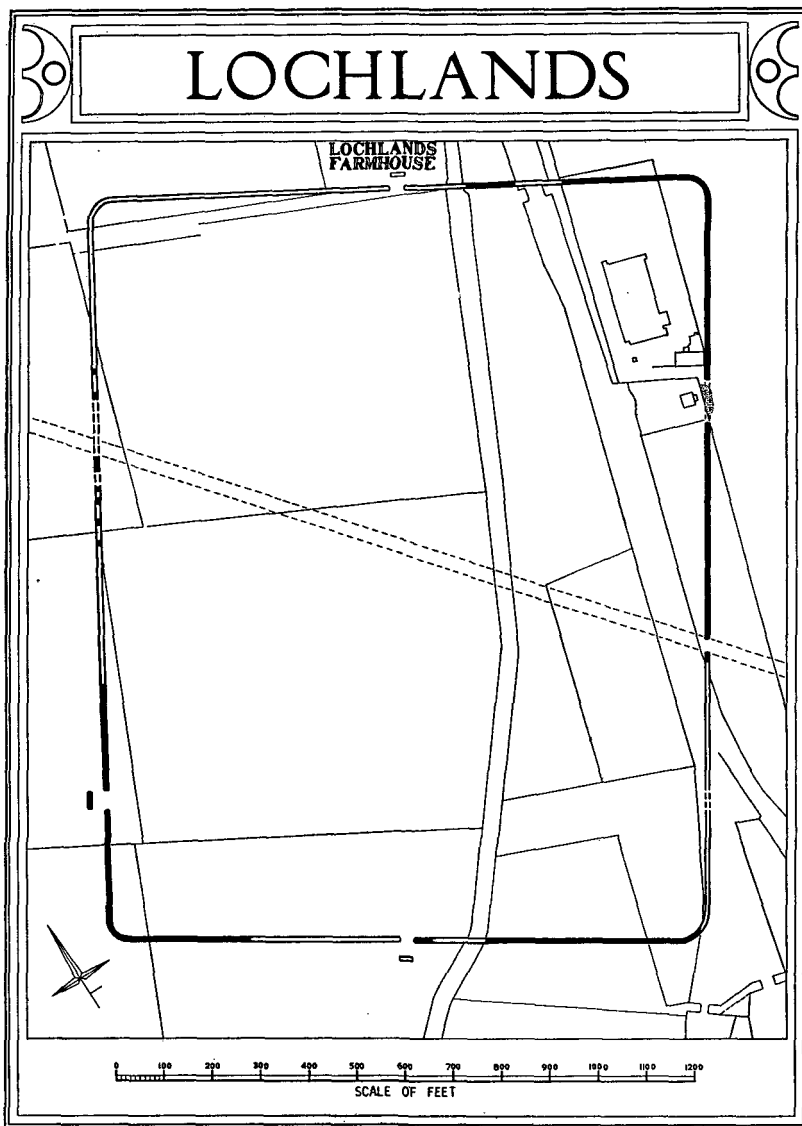


Fig. 7. Lochlands.

was found to coincide with the line of the supposed Roman road which is shown on the map running NW. from Camelon to the River Carron (fig. 8). It is possible that a road, corresponding at least at this point with that marked on the map, may have been laid over the defences of the camp at

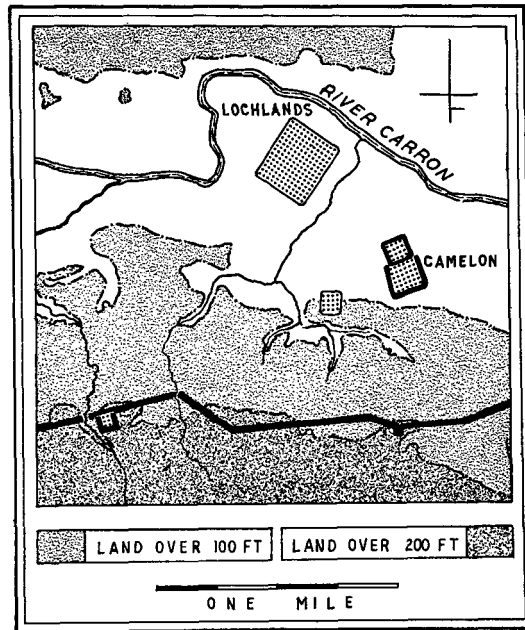


Fig. 8.

a time when these were disused. Whether the road followed the rest of the course laid down on the map, and whether, if it did, it was Roman in origin, have yet to be determined.<sup>1</sup>

The camp measures internally about 1,560 ft. by about 1,250 ft., an area of about 44 acres—a size comparable, for example, to that of Camp A at Pennymuir in Roxburghshire.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the Lochlands camp marks a stage on the earliest Roman advance northwards.

<sup>1</sup> An account of this road will appear in the forthcoming *Inventory of Stirlingshire*.

<sup>2</sup> R.C.A.M., *Inventory of Roxburghshire*, no. 794.