

# OBSERVATIONS

UPON THE

VARIOUS ACCOUNTS OF THE PROGRESS OF THE  
ROMAN ARMS IN SCOTLAND,

AND OF THE

SCENE OF THE GREAT BATTLE BETWEEN AGRICOLA  
AND GALGACUS.

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WHILE many of our countrymen have of late justly acquired much reputation for their successful pursuits in various departments of science and literature, it is much to be regretted that so little attention has been bestowed upon our national antiquities. This was of old times a subject of much interest and discussion among a number of learned men over all the British

empire, and contested between the parties with as much keenness, as if not only the honour, but the very existence of Scotland had depended upon the decision. The writings of Cambden, Usher, Lloyd, the Buchanans, Sir Robert Sibbald, &c. ; and, more lately, of Gordon, Whitaker, Stukely, Sir David Dalrymple, and others, if they are at all read, are now but little remembered. Even the chief subjects of dispute among them seem to be almost, if not altogether, forgotten ; and no farther illustrations of our remaining ancient monuments attempted, if we except the meagre, and too often inaccurate, Parochial Reports, published by Sir John Sinclair, and the gigantic work of Mr George Chalmers, entitled ' Caledonia.' We have had, indeed, lately, some discussion concerning the language of the Picts, and the origin of the Saxon dialect spoken in the low country of Scotland, between Mr Pinkerton, Mr Chalmers, the late Mr Murray, and the Rev. Dr Jamieson ; in which the arguments brought forward by the last mentioned gentleman appear to be nearly decisive of the question. But of the existing remains of antiquity, whether British, Roman, Danish, or Pictish, with which our country still abounds, but which are so rapidly disappearing that many of them will soon be irrecoverably lost, we have been extremely negligent and unmindful. To assist, therefore, in reviving this spirit of inquiry, and to encourage others who may be better qualified to investigate and explain such monuments, the writer of this paper begs leave to offer to the notice of the learned Society of Scottish Antiquarians, some observations on a subject which, although much agitated, has never as yet been satisfactorily determined. It is respecting the progress of the Roman arms in Caledonia, and the scene of the great battle between Agricola and Galgacus.

It is well known to every scholar, from the account of Tacitus, that, about the year 84 of the Christian era, Julius Agricola, the Roman general, having subdued the more southern parts of Scotland, led an army of about 26,000 men, during his seventh campaign, through the country of the Horesti, towards the north ; and fought a great battle, *ad montem Grampium*, against the Caledonians, who mustered upwards of 30,000, and were led by their chief, named Galgacus. The issue of the battle is said by the historian to have been highly favourable to the Romans ; yet, from the circumstance of their army making an immediate retreat to their former cantonments, there is some reason to suspect that the victory then obtained has been a little exaggerated.

Now, the scene of this action is the point to be ascertained ; and three different places are fixed on, besides some others now tacitly relinquished, at which it is supposed to have happened ; while each opinion is supported by the arguments of several learned and ingenious writers. These places are, Ardoch or Lindum, in Strathallan,—Dealgin Ross, near Comrie, in Strathearn,—and a third, somewhere more to the north than either.

Now, it is agreed on all hands, that *ad montem Grampium* means that long range of mountains still called the Grampian, or sometimes Grainsbein, which extends across almost the whole of Scotland from west to east, between Dumbarton on the Clyde, and Aberdeen on the Dee,—a tract of nearly 100 miles. It must therefore appear extremely difficult to find out the precise spot in so long a line, especially as the only authority we possess for determining it is the description of a single historian, remarkable for conciseness, combined with few local circumstances. Fortunately, however, in this case, so many particulars

of both are still extant, or lately were so, that the author presumes to hope he shall be able to point out the exact spot almost to a demonstration. It may here, however, be observed, that Richard of Cirencester, though in most respects very correct in naming and placing the various Roman stations in this country, has certainly erred egregiously in placing this mountain far to the north of Aberdeen, the real extremity of the Grampian range; and that, according to him, it must have been either Mormond, in the district of Buchan, or the Hill called the Knock, on the Dovern, an opinion which is altogether untenable.

First, then, in regard to Ardoch, it is well known that there are still to be seen at that place not only the remains of a very large camp, capable of containing all Agricola's army of 26,000 men, according to General Roy's calculation, who was probably the best acquainted with the Roman system of castrametation of any modern author on that subject, but also the strongest and most entire Roman fort to be found in Scotland, surrounded by five or six immense concentric trenches, and situated upon a small stream, with a very extensive prospect all round. Here, then, upon a large adjoining plain, according to Mr George Chalmers, was the scene of the conflict.\* "Though Mr Gordon was so *idle* as to place the site of the battle at the station of Victoria, Pennant was so *ill informed* as to confute Gordon's position upon mistaken principles; and Pennant supposed that the scene of action must be near the sea, where the fleet could cooperate; but the plan of the campaign only admitted of general co-operation. Pennant had attended so little to the inti-

\* Caledonia, vol. i. p. 113, Note.

"mations of Tacitus, as to suppose that the attack on the ninth legion, in the preceding year, was at the station of Victoria; but we have already seen that the whole operations of the preceding campaign were in Fife. *There is no evidence that Agricola ever reached the Tay.* The Tau of Tacitus was the Solway Frith. Maitland, who was the first antiquary who traced Roman roads and Roman camps beyond the Tay, was also the first who pointed to Urie Hill as the appropriate site of the battle of Mons Grampius. In his *loose conjectures* he was copied by Lord Buchan. And Roy followed both, who, in giving an account of the campaigns of Agricola, is always supposing what cannot be allowed, and what he cannot prove. *There is a thread of sophistry*, which, as it runs through the reasonings of all those writers on this point, it is time to cut, *for the sake of truth.* They presume that Agricola was the only Roman officer who made roads, or constructed camps, in North Britain; and that Lollius Urbicus and the Emperor Severus never appeared on that arduous theatre of war, &c. &c. Colonel Shand suggested the camp at Findochs on the Amon river, in Perthshire, as the place."

Now, in opposition to the dictates of Mr Chalmers, the author, with all due deference, is under the necessity of combating several of his positions, and of vindicating those of the gentlemen whom he so unceremoniously corrects for their sophistry and idle arguments. In the first place, Mr Pennant is fully justified, as will be seen afterwards, by the express words of the historian, in saying that the scene of action must have been near to the sea. Pennant had also supposed that the attack upon the ninth legion took place at Dealgin Ross or Victoria, which is still by much the most probable supposition. But Mr Chalmers is

still farther mistaken in saying, that all the operations of the former campaign were in Fife; whereas it is highly incredible that an experienced officer, as General Roy observes,\* would have endangered his whole army, by allowing them to have been so long shut up in a Peninsula, or *cul de sac*, as Agricola, so early as the third year of his command, had discovered Fife to be. For this, too, there could be no manner of occasion, having already with his fleet explored all the shores of the Friths of Forth and Tay, as well as the contiguous sea coasts, and making frequent incursions into the country for the purpose of alarming and plundering the inhabitants.—“*Præmissa classe, quæ pluribus locis prædata magnum et incertum terrorem faceret—ad Montem Grampium pervenit—quem jam hostes insederant.*” Of there being no evidence of Agricola having ever reached the Tay, or that the Tau of Tacitus was the Solway Frith, it is unnecessary at present to make any remarks; but it must be observed, upon what he calls the *loose conjectures and sophistry* of Mr Maitland, Lord Buchan, and General Roy, that there is far more probability, if not *truth*, in them, than in all which he and many others have written on the subject, notwithstanding their imputed ignorance of the operations of Lollius Urbicus and Severus, “on that arduous theatre of war.”

It is now time, however, after thus far clearing the way, to state seriously the objections that occur to the author for Lindum, or Ardoch, not being the scene of this famous battle. The first is, that this station is by far too remote from the Grampian Hills, “*ubi hostes jam insederant,*” being more than a dozen miles from the nearest part of them, immediately above Crieff.—Again,

\* Military Antiquities, p. 82.

if this objection is not insurmountable, another presents itself, which, if possible, is still more decisive of the point at issue. For, from the situation of Ardoch, there is no view at all of the sea; and, therefore, the Roman fleet could not have been seen from it, even had it sailed up the Forth as far as Stirling. How then could Tacitus have made Galgacus affirm to his brave compatriots, that the Roman fleet was not only in sight, but near at hand, “*imminente nobis classe Romana?*” Surely Mr Chalmers has either overlooked or misunderstood this passage, otherwise he could not thus have obstinately maintained an opinion so untenable.—Other arguments against it, if more were necessary, might be urged, from the immense works thrown up at Ardoch, which the Romans could neither have had leisure nor opportunity of constructing during the few days of their stay at the Mons Grampius;—and also from Ardoch being situated either *within or beyond* the limits of the country of the Horesti, to which Agricola retreated after the engagement, “*in fines Horestorum exercitum deducit,*” besides the concurrence of all these circumstances in another place, to be afterwards mentioned.

*Secondly.*—There come next to be stated the claims of Victoria or Dealgin Ross, to the honour of being the scene of this combat. It possesses indeed one advantage over Ardoch for this purpose, in being, as may be said, almost in the middle of the Grampian Mountains, but yet much farther distant from the sea, or any of the friths, from which it must have been altogether invisible. Mr Gordon allowed himself to be misled by its being called Victoria, a name perhaps imposed on it by the Roman General, in order to encourage his troops, somewhat dispirited by the doubtful victory of the ninth legion. For there is really very little reason to believe this place to have been the scene of

action. Tacitus says that Agricola separated his forces into three parts,—one of which probably remained at Ardoch, another was posted at Hierna or Strageth, upon the Earn, and the third, composed of the ninth legion, was pushed much farther into the hills, to Dealgin Ross. This last being the weakest, and the farthest removed from the main body, would most naturally be the first to be attacked by a brave and enterprising enemy; and the consequences of the attack appear, from several circumstances, to have been more fatal to the Romans than their historian thought proper to acknowledge;—for, after this campaign, we hear no more of the exploits of the ninth legion, nor is its name even mentioned, so that it must have been either nearly cut in pieces, and incorporated into some other, or was soon after removed from the island. Neither let it be considered as a small honour to this gallant body of Caledonians, that they were able to grapple hand to hand, in the very middle of their camp, with a whole Roman legion, and would probably have put them all to the sword, had they not received timely succour from the nearest stations of Ardoch or Strageth. Let it also be remembered, what this very historian says of Ireland, of his being informed that, with a single legion, the whole island might not only be subdued, but retained by the Romans. Mr Gordon also takes advantage of another name of this place, which it is very doubtful whether it ever bore, Galgachan Ross Moor, as an additional proof of its being the scene of the conflict with Galgacus. The real name in the language of the country is Dealgin Ross; nor, even were he correct in this respect, could that obviate or remove the insuperable objections formerly noticed. At the same time, it may here be observed that many of the names of places in the Roman Itineraries, especially those of rivers, may be discovered at this

day from the names they now bear.—Thus, Tina is the Tine,—Hierna the Earn,—Æsica the Esk,—Deva the Dee,—Ithuna the Ythan,—Varris, Forres, &c.—Mr Gordon's opinion on this subject was adopted by Dr Horsley and some others, who probably never visited the spot.

Since the time of Mr Gordon, who published his *Itinerarium Septentrionale* in 1726, a great deal of light has been thrown upon the Roman Antiquities of Scotland, by various eminent scholars and industrious antiquaries. It had formerly been supposed that the Romans never penetrated beyond the Tay, or, at least, beyond the Grampian Mountains; and a ridiculous fiction was published in some newspapers, in the year 1770,\* of a stone having been found near Aberdeen, marked R. IM. L. intended, no doubt, to be read “Romani Imperii Limes.” But this does not deserve farther notice. Various tracts, however, of roads and camps, far north of the Tay, were discovered, first by Mr Maitland, and afterwards by the Reverend Dr Jamieson and General Roy, to which last gentleman the public is indebted, as a learned professional man, for such a splendid and complete work on this subject, as must for ever silence all opposition, and merit the grateful remembrance of his country. But, what added a new stimulus to inquiries of this sort, was the discovery, in 1757, of a work of Richard of Cirencester, a Monk of Westminster, accompanied by a map of Scotland, descriptive of that country in the time of the Romans, and various *itineræ* of Roman officers from the remotest parts of England, at least as far north as the Moray Frith. This work, though recently discovered, was found so nearly to correspond with Ptolemy's Geography,

\* Lond. Chronicle, 24th July.

the *Notitiæ Imperii Romani*, and with the information obtained from all our other historians and antiquaries,—at the same time supplying many deficiencies, and correcting some obvious mistakes, that it is now considered as an authentic document, and constantly referred to as the very best authority upon all these subjects. General Roy, therefore, being possessed of this work, and all the other information that had been previously procured, partly in the course of his military duty, and partly by journies made on purpose, carefully explored, and made accurate drawings of the whole remains of Roman antiquities in Scotland, which, with suitable descriptions, were engraved and published at the expence of the London Society of Antiquarians in 1793. His account, therefore, is to be followed as the latest and the best authenticated of the progress of the Romans north of the Tay, and along the great valley of Strathmore, which runs parallel to the Grampian Mountains from Perth to Stonehaven, a distance of about seventy miles. By this open, easy, and direct rout, the Romans certainly proceeded northward, as every other invading enemy has since done, and not along the sea coast; so that any vestiges of Roman camps to be seen near Dundee, or Montrose, must be referred to occasional landings from the fleet, and were quite unconnected with Agricola's line of march.

In this direction, General Roy\* first finds Richard's ad Hiernam, now Strageth,—then Orrea, Bertha or Grassywalls, on the Tay, where the Romans had passed that majestic river. The next station from thence, he supposes, must have been near Meigle; but the country is too much cultivated to admit of its

\* In General Roy's work will be found, not only delineations of N. Britain, according to Ptolemy and Richard, but a correct map of the valley of Strathmore, and all the adjoining country.

being now discovered. Thereafter in succession occur the camps at Battledykes, between Kirrymuir and Brechin, along with some others in the same vicinity; then one at Keithock near the North Esk. After which, General Roy observes that another station should be looked for near to Monboddo, in the Mearns, which has since been accordingly found hard by, at Fordoun. Here a prætorium is still distinctly to be traced, and also some appearances of a large camp surrounding it, at the distance of an ordinary Roman march, about twelve miles from the one at Keithock, and the same distance from the next station at Stonehaven, where the real *Mons Grampius* will be found. "In this neighbourhood," says General Roy,\* "we are to look for the scene of the celebrated battle; for the nature of the country seems to point out that the Caledonians would take post on the Grampian mountains, towards their eastern extremity, where the plain becomes narrow, from the near approach of that lofty range to the sea."

Of this great number of camps, undoubtedly Roman, in the valley of Strathmore, General Roy, who accurately surveyed them, and measured their contents, expressly affirms that the one at Grassywalls on the Tay is about the same size as the large camp at Ardoch, which, according to the Polybian establishment, would contain three legions with their auxiliaries, or 25 or 26,000 men, being the whole force of Agricola; and expresses no doubt of its having been occupied by the very same army which was previously encamped at Ardoch. In the same manner, he surveyed the camp at Battledykes; and of it he observes, "It appears to me to be one of the most entire of the kind hitherto discovered; at the same time that the similarity of its figure and its dimensions prove indisputably that it held the same army

\* Pages 86, 87.

“formerly encamped at Ardoch and Grassywalls.”\* With these words before his eyes, it would be difficult to say what evidence could satisfy Mr George Chalmers, that Agricola and his army had ever passed the Tay. It is however, but doing that gentleman justice to acknowledge, that in most other parts of his Caledonia he is not disposed by any means to be so incredulous.

From the camp at Fordoun to Stonehaven is also about twelve miles, an ordinary Roman march, at which place the Grampian Hills approach so near to the sea, that the army of Agricola could not have marched farther to the north without passing through them, as it will be found that, under another leader, the Romans afterwards did. The square-formed camp, of which the traces have only of late been obliterated, was upon an extensive plain above the New Town of Stonehaven, and hard by the lately erected church and minister’s house of Fetteresso. The Caledonian camp was pitched at Re-dykes (Re, a King) above the house of Urie, upon the face of the hills directly opposite to that of Agricola, at the distance of not more than two miles, while he had the sea within somewhat less than a mile in his rear. This camp of the Caledonians was formerly supposed to have been Roman, being an awkward imitation of their mode of encampment, fortified with a wall and ditch, and having several gates with traverses in front of them. Upon examination, however, by the author of this article, first in 1778, and frequently afterwards,—for it is still almost entire,—it was found by him to be totally unlike those of the Romans in Scotland, which are universally rectangular, whereas in this one there is not a single right angle in its whole extent, which may amount to forty or fifty acres. Besides this,

\* Page 85.

the intrenchment is strongest towards the sea, with several out-works on that side, an evident proof that they expected the enemy from that quarter. On an adjoining lower hill called the Kempstone Hill (Kemp, a fight), were found not fewer than five or six Druidical circles, one of which contained three in a concentric form of a very large size; while all around, especially towards the north, are scattered a vast number of cairns and *tumuli* of different shapes and dimensions, some of them being of great height and circumference. At various times also several heads of spears of mixed brass, as almost all those in Scotland ascribed to the Romans are, and other remains of arms and instruments, have been found in the contiguous grounds, some of which were deposited, by the late Mr Barclay of Urie, in the Advocates’ Library of Edinburgh. There was also discovered, a few years since, in the ditch of the Scottish camp, a small hoop or ring of iron, of the rudest workmanship, and much corroded, being about four inches in diameter, and very thick, which could be imagined useful for no other purpose than to contain the axle of one of their war chariots. This last is preserved in the museum of Marischal College. A drawing of this Scottish camp, originally made by the author in 1778\*, was sent by him to the late General Melville, an eminent antiquary, and early associate of General Roy; and another furnished some years after by the Earl of Buchan was published by Nichols in the 36th number of his *Topographia Britannica*. There is also an engraving of it, though by no means accurate, in General Roy’s *Military Antiquities*†.

On the other hand, in order to identify the situation of the Roman Camp in the plain below, among other relics of antiquity,

\* Introduction to General Roy’s Work, p. iv.

† Plate 50.

a pretty large Tumulus or Barrow was opened in 1812, by the workmen employed in building the new church and minister's house of Fetteresso hard by, with a view of finding stones useful for the work, when it was discovered to be entirely composed of a vast quantity of urns and pottery of all sorts, ashes, earth, half burnt bones, and charcoal. Some of the most entire of the urns are now in the possession of the Reverend Mr Thomson, minister of the parish. This mount was *in* or *very near* to the Roman station in the plain, at least two miles south from the Scottish Camp at Re-dykes, and may have been about twenty or thirty feet in diameter. From the contents also, it evidently points out its origin, as the place where the Romans had burnt the bodies of all who had fallen in battle, or died while they occupied this station. Here then, at length, has been found the only particular wanting to determine the site of this battle. For here every circumstance concurs in pointing out this place as the real scene of the conflict between Agricola and Galgacus; a combination no where else to be found along the whole chain of the Grampian mountains, at Ardoch, at Dealgin Ross, Strageth, Battledykes, or any other fancied situation; and here, it is presumed, that this much disputed point will be invariably fixed, and universally acknowledged to be so. Here the Roman fleet was seen riding at anchor in the bay of Stonehaven, within less than a league of their camp, where no enemy could interrupt their mutual intercourse. Here Galgacus would see the fleet equally well from the hills above, and might justly be made to exclaim, "*Imminente nobis classe Romana*,"—and from this place Tacitus might properly say, upon Agricola's retreat southward after the battle, "*Exercitum in fines Horestorum deducit*." Though the result of this engagement, according to Tacitus, was highly favour-

able to the Romans, yet, as he acknowledged the spirit and energy with which the Caledonians fought, the disproportion in the number of the killed could scarcely have been so considerable as he describes it, nor could the victory over our heroic ancestors have proved so very easy and decisive, seeing that he was instantly obliged to abandon his northern expedition, and march back to his old quarters at Ardoch. His fleet, indeed, are said to have circumnavigated the whole coasts, probably as far as Orkney and Shetland, occasionally landing as before, and pillaging the defenceless inhabitants, but never again at this time attempting any permanent settlement or conquest.

It is certain, however, that some time thereafter, it is not exactly known how long, another Roman army, led by Severus, Lollius Urbicus, or some other General, penetrated much farther into this part of Caledonia, at least as far as the Moray Frith; and that it was finally reduced, according to Richard of Cirencester, into a sort of Roman province, under the name of *Vespasiana*, and which he says continued attached to their empire for about seventy years before the final departure of that people. History informs us of several expeditions undertaken for this purpose by the two Generals above mentioned; but scarcely any particulars are taken notice of, unless one by Dio Cassius, that does much honour to the bravery and perseverance of our ancestors, while it rather throws discredit on the former easy victory said to have been obtained by Agricola,—and this is, that in one of these expeditions the Emperor Severus sustained a loss of not less than 50,000 men. Whatever may have been the case, and at whatever period this conquest may have been achieved, we have abundant proofs of its having happened, from the frequent remains of Roman camps, and other monuments of that people,



which have been discovered over all this tract of country. Some of these, therefore, it is now proposed to illustrate.

The Roman General, whoever he was, that next engaged in this undertaking, appears to have followed Agricola's line of march as far as Stonehaven, on the eastern extremity of the *Montes Grampii*, and to have then directed his route through the hills, the road along the coast being more difficult or impracticable, straight to the river Dee, from which he was distant only about twelve miles. In this line, the level of the country is somewhat lower, being chiefly through wet moors and morasses, in one of which last, about half-way in this day's march, upon the property of Mr Silver of Netherley, in the year 1809, was found a very fine Roman Gladius, which is now to be seen in the museum of the Marischal College of Aberdeen. It is of the mixed brass, of which are formed almost all the Roman arms found in this country; and, with the exception of the handle, which was quite decayed, it is as entire, and as sharp at the point and edges, as when first buried in the morass, by which it has probably been so well preserved. It is of the exact form and size of some which are described and engraved in Montfauçon's *Antiquities*, and of some found in the line of the Roman wall, as published in Gordon's *Itinerarium*. The length of the sword, exclusive of the handle, is about twenty inches, much swelled, and thick in the middle, which makes it very heavy when held in the hand, and afterwards tapering to a sharp point, so that it must have been a far more formidable weapon than the *long iron swords* of the Caledonians. For it appears from Herodian that the Britons were by no means ignorant of the use of iron; and from Tacitus, that the swords of the Caledonians were very large, and only cut edge-ways, having no point:—Herodian says, “ἐδὲ γὰρ (Βρετάννοι) ἰσθῆτος

“ἴσασι χρῆσιν, ἀλλὰ τὰς μὲν λαπαράς κὶ τὰς τραχήλας κοσμοῦσι σιδήρω:—  
“εἰσι δὲ μαχιμώτατοι τε καὶ φονικώτατοι,”\* &c.; and Tacitus:—“Ac  
“primo congressu eminus certabatur, simul constantia, simul  
“arte, Britanni ingentibus gladiis et brevibus cetris missilia nos-  
“trorum vitare vel excutere, atque ipsi magnam vim telorum  
“superfundere,—et hostibus parva scuta et enormes gladios ge-  
“rentibus,—nam Britannorum gladii sine mucrone,”† &c. And these quotations, it is supposed, will sufficiently answer the objections of some antiquaries, among whom is Mr Pinkerton, who pretend that all the Roman arms at this period were made of steel, while those of the Scots and more northern nations were of mixed brass. Until, therefore, we shall have discovered in Scotland some of these “*enormes gladii sine mucrone*” made of brass, we must be permitted to believe that the arms of our ancestors were, in the age of Agricola, nearly the same as in more modern times, viz. the small shield and great iron sword or *claymore*; and that those of the same metal and form as the one now described were infallibly Roman.—But, to return from this digression.

The Roman army, having marched through these morasses for about twelve miles, arrived at the banks of the river Dee, at a place called Tilbouries, about seven or eight miles above Aberdeen, where there still appears a broad, shallow, and excellent ford, and pitched their camp on a rising ground upon the opposite bank. This is the place now known by the name of Norman Dykes, which has probably been corrupted in the course of ages from Roman Dykes; and which, until of late, made it al-

\* Herodian, Lib. iii. 14.

† In Vita Agricolaë.

ways be supposed to have been a camp of the Danes or Norwegians. There is also a curious circumstance observed on the opposite south bank of the river, that, for nearly a mile, the stones upon the barren heath are partially vitrified on the surface, as if by fire, although beneath they are not so; which can only be accounted for by supposing that the Romans set fire to the woods then growing there, in order to open up a passage for their army.

By reason of the corruption of the name of this camp, it is probable that it had so long escaped the notice of all our antiquaries; for it appears never to have been observed until 1801, when Colonel Shand, a very intelligent artillery officer, first examined it, and believed it to be Roman. It was afterwards more accurately surveyed in 1807 by the author, accompanied by a most respectable neighbouring proprietor, Mr Irvine of Drum, and Captain P. Henderson, then of the 29th regiment of foot, who also made a drawing of it, which, by their desire, he transmitted to Mr George Chalmers, who afterwards had it engraved and published in his *Caledonia*.\* There cannot, therefore, now exist the smallest doubt of its being a camp of the Romans, where they passed the river Dee, and one likewise of the largest size, according to General Roy's description of them; for it was found to contain about eighty Scots acres, and the form a regular oblong square, of which, at that time, two right angles were distinctly visible. The situation of it is elevated about fifty yards above the level of the river; and it commands a most extensive prospect along the course of the Dee, both above and below, as well as towards the north, for a good many miles. Here, then, is to be placed the Deva both of Ptolemy and of Richard; and it

\* Vol. i. p. 125.

is also believed, (as mentioned in a former paper given in to this Society\*) that the Devana, the capital of the Taixali, has been discovered in the same neighbourhood, and not about Aberdeen, as had been hitherto supposed.

Within three miles of this Roman station, and towards the north-west, the same gentlemen discovered, upon a low hill, on the farm of Angustown, near to the ancient Castle of Drum, an immense number, as appeared to them, of the foundations of houses of a circular form, rudely built of undressed stones, without mortar, generally about two feet high, and varying from ten to twenty feet in diameter. These appearances extended for at least a mile in all directions, and are very near to each other, with this remarkable peculiarity, that three of them are commonly placed together, while double parallel walls of the same height seem to have connected them with other three circles of the same kind a little way off, and so on throughout the whole extent of ground occupied by them, which cannot be less than the space already mentioned. There being several hundreds of them scattered over and around this low hill, they must have contained a very considerable population, while the rude habitations constructed within the circles, of turf and boughs of trees, bear an exact resemblance to the towns of the ancient Britons, as described by Whitaker and other authors.† It must appear, then, from its situation being so near to the Roman camp, and from other concomitant circumstances, at least extremely probable that this place was the true site of the capital of the Taixali; and that the General of the Romans, whoever he might be, was well acquainted with it, and directed the march of his army straight

\* Transactions, vol. ii. part 1.

† History of Manchester.

towards it accordingly. It may also be proper to mention here the British fortification on the top of an insulated hill in the line of the Roman march, and about eight or nine miles from Norman Dykes. It is called the Barmekin of Echt; and, so far as is known, has hitherto been little noticed, and never engraved.\* This is, however, of the less moment, as it is precisely similar to two of the same kind near the North Esk, in Angus, called the Brown and White Caterthuns, only of smaller dimensions, which have been published in General Roy's work,† and were all, no doubt, constructed for the protection of the wives and families of the natives during the repeated invasions of their country.

From the station of Norman Dykes, there have as yet been discovered no traces of any other Roman camp nearer than that of Glenmailin, a distance of nearly thirty miles, though there certainly must have been one somewhere near to the burgh of Inverury.‡ At any rate, there can be little doubt of the ancient fortification on the high hill of Benochie having been occupied, if not constructed, by them, as it lies directly in their route between these two stations. The form of the camp at Glenmailin, called also Re-dykes, as described and published by General Roy, clearly shews it to have been Roman, and lying near to the sources of the river Ythan, is believed to have been the station *ad Itunam* of Richard. Several other appearances of Roman camps have been found to the northward of Glenmailin, on both sides of the river Spey, by Colonel Shand and others, particularly one on the banks of that river near Gordon Castle, where it is supposed to have been passed by the Romans, and thus answers

\* A description of this hill is given in this volume.

† Plates 47 and 48.

‡ Gen. Roy's Mil. Antiq. plate 51.

to the station called Tuessis by Richard. Beyond this also are enumerated by him the stations of *Ptoroton*, or Burghhead; the *Aræ Finium Imperii Romani*, or Tarbetness; the *Loxa*, or river Lossy; the *Varar Æstuarium*, or Moray Frith, &c. Of these, however, it is only farther proposed to take notice of *Ptoroton*, as being believed to be the extremity of the Roman conquests in Scotland, the capital of their province of *Vespasiana*, and where there are still to be seen some curious remains of antiquity.\*

This place, which appears to be the *Alata Castra* of Ptolemy, and the *Ultima Ptoroton* of Richard of Cirencester, is situated on a rocky promontory projecting into the Moray Frith, and rising about sixty feet above the low-water mark of the tide. The rock is of freestone or sandstone, and is cut off from the mainland by three or four concentric ditches of vast size, being from sixteen to twenty feet deep, and from forty to fifty feet wide at the top. The spaces between them are about sixty feet in breadth; and there is a bay and harbour on the west side, where a number of small vessels may remain in perfect safety. It is also worth notice that, according to the survey of Moray, published by the Reverend John Grant of Elgin in 1798, the ancient name of the village without the fortification was Torry, or Terrytown, a name so much resembling the *Ptoroton* of Richard. It is well known that this stronghold was afterwards frequently employed and occupied by the Danes and Norwegians, in their repeated piratical descents and invasions of this part of Scotland, and was by them named the *Burgh*, or *Barghhead*. The area of the Fort *within the trenches* extends to several acres, and appears from the height and steepness of the rock to be quite inaccessi-

\* See a very just engraving of it in Gen. Roy's Mil. Antiq. plate 33.

ble from the sea. This curious spot was visited by the author in 1809, soon after a Roman Bath was said to have been discovered in it; and he not only found the above description fully confirmed, but, besides the immense fortifications or defences towards the landside, he found a very large rampart, consisting of the most various materials, surrounding the whole interior of the fort, viz. masses of stone with lime cement, pieces of pottery, and baked bricks and tiles, half burnt beams of wood, broken cornices and mouldings of well cut freestone, along with outlines of the figures of various animals, tolerably well represented, in many of them. All these clearly indicated the ruins of not an ordinary Roman station, but of a considerable town. In addition likewise to all this, while some gentlemen of the vicinity, having made a purchase of the property, with a view of improving the harbour, and enlarging the village for the purposes of trade, were employing labourers to clear away the rubbish of the old buildings, &c. about 1807 or 1808, they discovered a stone stair of about thirty steps, leading down to a reservoir or cistern for water, in the bottom of the rock. This being cleared out and laid open shewed that it had been excavated to supply the inhabitants with water (there being no spring in the place) both by receiving the rain that fell from above, and likewise what might be filtered through the sandstone rock from below. Having descended to the bottom of the stair, it was found to end in a chamber with water in it, of about ten or twelve feet square, having its sides for six or eight feet upwards covered with a coating of fine plaster, and niches in the angles, seemingly intended for statues. This could only have been the work of the Romans; and the short history of this place seems to be that, after having been abandoned by that people, the natives had burnt their habitations; and the

Danes or Norwegians, finding it an excellent situation for protecting them in their piratical depredations, had constructed the present rampart of all the heterogeneous materials which were left.

Whether the Romans penetrated farther in this direction than their station at Ptoroton, is very uncertain. Richard indeed mentions Varis, which is most probably Forres, within a few miles of Ptoroton; and also in the same neighbourhood Ptolemy places Banatia, which, from the similarity of name to Bona or Bunes, upon the river Ness, where there are still some remains supposed to be Roman, it has been conjectured that the country of the Vacomagi was subdued by that people as far to the west as Inverness. As to their stations in the interior parts of the country, we find in Richard one at Tuessis on the Spey, about Cromdale; one named Tamea, which has been supposed to be Braemar Castle; and another called *In Medio*, marked in one of his Itineraries upon the route from Ptoroton over the mountains, by Blair of Athole, to their station of Bertha or Orrea upon the Tay. To the eastward of this line, therefore, the whole country appears to have been formed into the Roman province named by Richard, *Vespasiana*, until it reached the borders of *Valentia*, while all the extensive districts to the west and north may be called *Caledonia Invicta*. That this did not happen from its being unknown to them, clearly appears from the works both of Ptolemy and Richard, who mention the various tribes who inhabited these countries, and also point out several head-lands, and other places, which agree tolerably well with the real geography of them.

One other Roman station, if it really was one, only remains to be mentioned, emphatically named by Richard, "*Aræ Finium Imperii Romani*," and which is universally acknowledged to be

Tarbet-Ness,\* the extreme eastern promontory of Ross-shire, on the north side of the Moray Frith, nearly opposite to Burgh Head or Ptoroton. Here are still to be seen two pretty large cairns or tumuli about two hundred yards distant from each other, having a small but very safe harbour hard by, and in the immediate neighbourhood some remains of intrenchments apparently Roman. This place had probably been occupied as a temporary station by the fleet of Agricola, or some other Roman commander, while navigating those seas, and has been thus communicated to posterity as the farthest extent of their conquests in Britain. It is taken notice of under this name by no author excepting Richard. As to the strange names by which these cairns or *aræ* are now known, it is believed that no etymologist, either Celtic or Gothic, has as yet pretended to explain them, or even to ascertain to what language they belong. The one is called Ulli-vacum, and the other Spadie-lingum. Beyond this place, over all the counties of Inverness, Ross, Sutherland, and Caithness, there are no vestiges of camps or other Roman monuments, nor is it known that any of their coins or instruments of war have ever been found in them.

Having thus described at some length a few remains of Roman antiquities which have not been fully illustrated by former writers, or have altogether escaped their notice, there is little farther to be observed, unless to account for the very few monuments of the arts of that people to be found in this portion of their vast empire; and the reason of this will naturally occur to any person who considers how short the period was during which the country was possessed by them, and that instead of permanent settlements

\* See a very correct engraving of this place in General Roy's Work, Plate 34.

of Roman legions for some centuries, as in the more southern parts of the island their armies only marched through it as conquerors, opposed at every step by the warlike natives, and, after repeated invasions, as often obliged to retire, and yield up all their short-lived conquests. For it is only during a long and peaceable possession that the arts can flourish, or that public highways, bridges, baths, or other splendid monuments, can be constructed; though the number of sepulchral urns, arms, and utensils of various sorts, which already have been found, as well as the frequent discovery of Roman coins and medals, sufficiently demonstrate at least the temporary residence of that people among our northern ancestors.

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