

### III.

HISTORICAL NOTICES OF "THE BROCH," OR BURGHEAD, IN MORAY,  
WITH AN ACCOUNT OF ITS ANTIQUITIES. BY JAMES MACDONALD,  
ESQ., A.M., ELGIN. [ABSTRACT.]

The Broch, or, as it is now generally called, Burghead, is a small sea-port on the southern shore of the Moray Firth, and distant from Elgin about nine miles. To those acquainted with the "Military Antiquities" of General Roy, and the "Caledonia" of George Chalmers, its more

modern name will recall the locality which those authors have identified with the *Πτερωτὸν στρατόπεδον* of Ptolemy, and the *Ptoroton* of the treatise "De Situ Britanniae," usually ascribed to Richard of Cirencester.

Save, however, the rocky promontory on which it stands, and the striking view of the opposite shores of the Firth, that may, under favourable circumstances, be thence obtained, there is little about Burghead to attract attention; for its once formidable ramparts have been all but swept away before the march of improvement, and its celebrated "Roman Well" is seldom in a state that invites very close inspection.

The headland itself is the termination of a low undulating range of sandstone hills, that skirt the coast between that point and the *embouchure* of the Lossie, eight miles to the east. Its bluff extremity is divided for a considerable distance inland into two distinct areas or terraces,—the surface of the northern terrace being at first much and suddenly depressed below the level of that of the southern. From near its middle to the base of the Clarkly Hill, as the adjoining portion of the coast range is termed, there extends a flat space about 800 feet in length by 1000 in breadth, and of the same elevation as the lower terrace. These peculiarities of configuration are clearly due to the action of the sea in some past age, and, along with its reptiliferous sandstones, its submarine forest, and the recently formed dunes that thickly fringe the shores of the bay which indents the coast to the south-west as far as and beyond Culbin, have often of late drawn the rambling geologist to the spot.

But it was not till General Roy had associated its fortunes with the progress of the Roman arms in Britain that the history of Burghead became an object of general interest. Before his day, nothing had been advanced regarding it beyond the supposition that the fort was of Danish construction. Once propounded, however, the belief in its Roman origin soon gained that all but universal credence which it still enjoys. To show the doubtful nature of the foundation on which this theory rests, and to give such details respecting the antiquities of the place as may lead to a more satisfactory explanation of them, is the principal object of the present communication; and it may be well to clear the way, by reviewing, as briefly as possible, the various notices of the place which occur in the more important of those authors who have alluded to it.

*Boece*.—What appears to be the first mention of the promontory under its present name, will be found in Hector Boece. Malcolm II. having refused, as is alleged, to deny an asylum to such fugitives from England as might be anxious to escape from the rule of King Sueno, the latter sent orders to two of his Scandinavian subordinates, Olave, a Norwegian, and Enetus, a Dane, to collect a body of troops, and invade Scotland. Accordingly, these chiefs landed with their followers at the mouth of the river Spey; and, after wasting the intervening country with fire and sword, laid siege to the forts of Elgin, Forres, and Narmin. Of these, the last was by far the strongest; and so important for the success of their enterprise was its reduction deemed, that the whole strength of the invaders was ultimately directed against it. While thus engaged, word was brought to the Danes that an army of Scots, led by Malcolm in person, was already within five miles of their outposts; upon which they immediately raised the siege, and marched to meet them, putting to instant death messengers sent at this juncture by Malcolm, to inquire why they had made this unprovoked incursion into his territories. On hearing of this wanton act of cruelty, the Scottish king, who had halted for a time, again put his forces in motion, but was compelled by the approach of night to bivouac near Killos (Kinloss). Here, on the following day, a battle was fought, in which, in spite of the exhortations and personal valour of their leader, the Scots were totally defeated, and Malcolm himself so severely wounded that he was carried off the field as dead. Laden with spoil, the victors then resumed their position before Narmin. “This fort,” says Boece, “stood on a peninsula, and was furnished with towers and a wall of great height, marvellous works. It was accessible by a narrow path; and this neck of land being afterwards removed by the Danes, it became an island instead of a peninsula, and was joined to the mainland by a bridge.” Disheartened by the defeat of their countrymen in the battle of Kinloss, the beleaguered garrison now offered to surrender to the Danes, on condition that their lives should be spared. The terms were accepted; but no sooner had the besiegers been put in possession of the fort, than, in violation of their promise, they hanged its defenders on the walls. “Thus,” adds the chronicler, “did Narmin, by far the strongest fort in those parts, fall into the hands of the Danes, who in a short time so strengthened it by new works, that

many deemed it impregnable. A new name, THE BURG—a Teutonic vocable—was likewise bestowed upon it, which has come down to our own day.” The garrisons of Elgin and Forres, warned by the fate of Narmin, abandoned their posts; and the Danes, thus masters of the whole of Moray, resolved to settle permanently in the country. Next spring, however, they were overpowered at Murthlac (Mortlach, in Banffshire) by Malcolm, who, in consequence of a vow made during the progress of the engagement, founded a see there, the seat of which was afterwards transferred to Aberdeen. The death of this monarch is usually set down as having happened in the year 1014.<sup>1</sup>

Resting exclusively on the authority of Boece, the whole of this story is open to suspicion, and its historical value will be variously estimated; nor can there be much doubt that some of the details into which the writer enters are purely imaginary. At first sight it would seem to derive some confirmation from the assertion of Fordun,<sup>2</sup> that the bishopric of Mortlach was established by Malcolm II. after gaining a victory over the Northmen, did not the Episcopal Registers of Aberdeen appear to intimate that the real founder of the see was Malcolm Canmore.<sup>3</sup> But a more satisfactory argument in favour of its authenticity, so far at least as the destruction of Narmin, afterwards The Burg, is concerned, may be drawn from the fact, that we have in Burghead, both as regards its situation and antiquities, the remains of a fort, which answers, to the most minute particular, all the requirements of the narrative,—a coincidence scarcely possible were the whole purely fictitious. To those acquainted with the topography of the “Laigh of Moray,” and with the promontory itself, this must be evident enough; although, strange to say, Narmin has hitherto been generally identified with Nairn,—a mistake traceable, in the first place, to the carelessness of Bellenden, and subsequently to the readiness with which compilers of history often receive the statements of others without due examination.

Perhaps the only objection that can be advanced against recognising Burghead as the Narmin of Boece, is his assertion that the Danes con-

<sup>1</sup> Scotorum Historiæ, &c. Hectore Boethio Deidonano Auctore, p. 240 et seq. (Second Edition.) Parisiis, 1574.

<sup>2</sup> Scotichronicon, vol. i. p. 227. Edin. 1759.

<sup>3</sup> Reg. Episcop. Aberdon. Preface, p. 18. (Spalding Club, 1845.)

verted the latter into an island, this being an undertaking which could scarcely have been accomplished by any means which can be supposed to have been at the command of the invaders. It must, however, be borne in mind that the writer is describing a place which in all likelihood he never saw, and may have thus been led, in noticing the fact, to speak as if the isolation of the fortress had been effected by cutting a canal from sea to sea. Besides, the statement is sufficiently explained by the existence of three parallel ditches, of considerable depth, crossed in the middle by a bridge-like path, which had been drawn across the promontory for defensive purposes, at the very time, be it noted, that its fortifications assumed their latest form; and it is not a little singular, that these ditches were formerly known to the natives of the village as "The Brigs,"—a name, it can hardly be doubted, given originally to the entrances alone, and descriptive, to some extent, of what they really were when first constructed.

*The Sagas.*—If it can now be shown that the Sagas have preserved any memorial of a warlike incident, whose details in some measure correspond with those of the preceding narrative, the most sceptical reader of Boeoe will probably admit that his account of the battle of Kinloss may rest on a foundation of truth, so that even should the Scandinavian records be silent regarding the fate of Narmin, some credit may still be given to the story of its fall. In this view, the notice which they contain of a military expedition undertaken by the Norsemen against the Scottish mainland, the chief event of which was a victory gained near a ness or promontory of Moray, possesses considerable importance, although the names of its leaders, its date, and its professed object, cannot be easily reconciled with the corresponding particulars, as given by the Scottish annalist:

Thorfinn, the celebrated Jarl of Orkney, had been invested by his grandfather, Melkolf (Malcolm), King of Scotland, with the earldom of Sutherland and Caithness. Karl or Kali Hundason, represented as Malcolm's successor, afterwards demanded tribute from Thorfinn. This being refused, he bestowed the title of earl on his own nephew, Moddan, and sent him to the north to enforce his claims. Meanwhile Thorfinn, with the aid of a Norse chief, Thorkil Fostri, having obliged Moddan to retire, overran Sutherland and Ross, making war "far and wide in Scot-

land." Word having been brought to Kali at Berwick of these proceedings, he at once set sail with a fleet and army, and, on arriving in northern waters, engaged the Norsemen off the promontory of Dyrness (Durness). Being defeated, Kali sailed southward to Breidafjord (Moray Firth), and landing, got together fresh troops. Thither he was followed by the Norse chiefs, with all their forces; and the rival armies met at a place called Torfness, "south of Bæfjord" (or, according to another reading, Breidafjord), somewhere in Maerhaefi (Moray). The engagement which ensued resulted in the complete defeat of the Scots, and the reported death of their king on the field.

"The wolves bit (sword) reddened its edges  
In the place called Torfness.  
A young man was the cause.  
This happened on a Monday.  
In this congress south of Eckial,  
The thin (well-sharpened) swords sung  
When the valiant prince fought  
Against the ruler of Skotland."

No mention is made in the Saga of the capture of any stronghold; but it is admitted that the natives of the country were opposed to the invaders, and severely dealt with in consequence. In the significant words of the Skald Arnor,

"The conflagration blazed."

Thorfinn is further said to have followed up his success by overrunning the country as far south as Fife.<sup>1</sup>

On comparing the two narratives a marked agreement will be found in several essential points, which it is unnecessary to particularise. The discrepancies are perhaps as numerous, but some of them are difficulties that meet us whatever view be taken of the matter,—*e. g.*, the King Kali of the Sagas, otherwise unknown to Scottish writers. Neither

<sup>1</sup> Orkneyinga Saga, pp. 31-43. Ed. Jonæus, Hafniæ, 1780. Translation of Extract from "Orkneyinga Saga," by W. F. Skene, Esq., in "Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis," pp. 339-345. Iona Club, 1839. Cf. Torfaeus, lib. i. cap. xiii. Hafniæ 1697.

annalist—the one credulous, the other boastful to excess—can be supposed to have written with much regard to historical accuracy; and due allowance must be made for this disturbing element, as well as for the fact that among every people tradition, to the inextricable confusion of all chronology, occasionally assigns to some favourite national hero the glory of achievements which belong to others. There is, however, one circumstance, as to which even tradition is less likely to err in recording a transaction of this kind, than in regard to either the date, the chief actors, or the motives from which it was undertaken—*its locality*. Is, then, the Torfness of the Saga the Narmin of Boece?

Unfortunately, much of the Scottish geography of the Sagas has not yet been satisfactorily cleared up; and though Torfness occurs several times, the context throws little light on its exact situation. Indeed, it would almost seem as if the Norsemen had bestowed the same name on more than one Scottish headland. As the scene of the battle between Thorfinn and Kali, it was unquestionably a promontory in Moray, on the southern shore of the Breidafjord,—*i. e.*, Broad Firth, or Moray Firth, and, according to the Scald Arnor, “south of Eckial,” or Ekkjalsbakke.” This last, repeatedly noticed in the Sagas, Worsaae believes to be the river Oykel, which was, and still is, the boundary between Sutherland and Ross. Others place it elsewhere, but still so as to leave Burghead to the south or south-east. Looking, therefore, at the account of Thorfinn’s expedition to Moray as a whole, and taking into account the central position of Burghead, and its capabilities as a seaport, it will be perhaps admitted that there is no point on the southern seaboard of the Moray Firth, at or near which he was so likely to establish his headquarters. Nay more; one may even venture to affirm that it must have been in its neighbourhood that he met and defeated his opponent. It follows, therefore, since no other of Boece’s Danish battles except Kinloss can possibly be identified with that between Thorfinn and Kali, that Torfness and Kinloss are probably but different names for the same engagement, and that Narmin or Burghead, and Torfness, are almost to a certainty the same promontory.

Etymologically there seems no connection whatever between the two names—Narmin and Torfness. In Arrowsmith’s map of St Kilda, Borrera, &c., contained in his “Memoir relative to the Construction of

the Map of Scotland, 1807," an isolated rock to the north of Borrera is marked "Stack-Narmin;" but, with this exception, Narmin does not appear to occur elsewhere in Britain. Torfness, meaning Turf-head, is apparently descriptive of a headland where such fuel was to be had in abundance, and in this respect was once quite applicable to Burghead. It deserves to be noted, however, that while in the common text of the "Orkneyinga Saga" Torfness is said to have been the scene of the events now under discussion, the historian Torfæus, writing a century and a-half ago, with original documents before him, gives Thorsness in the parallel passages. This, if the better reading, would be the "Promontory of Thor," and so analogous to Thorsaa (Thurso), "Thor's rivulet." In the "Survey of Moray," by the Rev. Messrs Grant and Leslie, published in 1798, it is stated as an argument in favour of the identity of Burghead with the *Ἰππεῶρων στατόπεδον* of Ptolemy, "that the old inhabitants of the burgh, within these fifty years, called it Torytown, or Terytown."<sup>1</sup> May not this appellation be traced with more propriety to the Thorsness of the Norsemen? Burg or Broch is, as is well known, applied in the north of Scotland to those buildings otherwise known as Pictish towers. The remark that it was first bestowed on this fort by its Danish conquerors, is probably a mere conjecture of Boeche's. At all events, it must have been originally given to the defences of the place, though afterwards extended so as to include as now the headland itself.<sup>2</sup>

*Bellenden.*—Bellenden (circa 1541), in his translation of Boeche, took the liberty of substituting Narne for the Narmin of the original. Although the two words resemble each other closely enough to render it possible that the change may have been accidental, it is more likely that

<sup>1</sup> Survey of Moray, 1798, p. 53. Aberdeen, 1798.

<sup>2</sup> At page 21 of the preface to vol. ii. part 2, of the "Origines Parochiales Scotiae," we read:—"It may not be out of place to intimate an opinion not hazarded in the text, that the Dufeyras of the Sagas, an emporium of Moray, and hitherto conjectured to be Banff, was no other than the old Roman station in the parish of Duffus, known to geographers as Alata Castra and Ptoroton, to which its Norse occupiers subsequently applied their usual term Burgh, and which still bears the name Burghead." But at page 233 of the "Orkneyinga Saga," Dufeyras is called an "emporium of Scotland," not of Moray; and again, at page 253, the same town is spoken of as if it certainly lay beyond the boundaries of that province. Cf. Torf. Orcades, lib. i., cap. xxvi. and cap. xxix.



it was designed. And it must be admitted that the mistake into which he thus fell was natural enough, in the case of one who, notwithstanding his connection with the diocese, could have possessed but a very superficial acquaintance with the names and relative situations of places in Moray, as well as with its traditional history. Exclusive of Inverness, Elgin, Forres, and Nairn, or more fully Inver-Nairn, were the only towns in the province possessed of municipal privileges. In virtue of these, the gift of Scottish kings in days bygone, they had all become little centres of population and trade. As they were situated at no great distance from one another, and had formerly been protected each by its fort or castle, the mention of two of these in connection with the same series of warlike operations naturally enough suggested the third, —more especially as the promontory of Burghead, then inhabited only by a small colony of fishermen, had, long before Bellenden's day, ceased to be reckoned among the places of importance in the district, and may have been unknown to the courtly archdeacon by any name whatever.

As already remarked, the words of Boece can apply to Burghead, and Burghead only. Nairn (Invernairn or Innernairn) is situated at the mouth of a river of the same name, which, it may be noticed in passing, is called by Boece, in his "Scotorum Regni Descriptio," the "Nairden,"<sup>1</sup> an appellation quite distinct from the Narmin of his history; and had the latter been near a stream of any magnitude, it is not easy to see why no notice was taken of the circumstances. The coast line of the Moray Firth, especially between Findhorn and Inverness, has no doubt undergone considerable changes within the last few hundred years; but there is not the slightest evidence to show that, as regards the nature of the ground, or its proximity to the river, Nairn was ever very differently placed from what it is now. In the English versions of Camden's "Britannia," we certainly read as follows:—"Hard by is Narden, or Narne, an hereditary sheriffdom of the Campbells of Lorne; where, *in a peninsula, there stood a fort of mighty height, built with wonderful works,* and formerly held by the Danes;"<sup>2</sup> and, from the mention of the Campbells, there can be no doubt that the reference here is to the

<sup>1</sup> Scotiæ Reg. Descrip., p. 4. Here Bellenden has "Nardyn."

<sup>2</sup> Britannia, by Gibson, p. 943. London, 1695.

town of Nairn. An examination, however, of the passage in the original Latin, discloses the fact, that the clause in italics is taken word for word from Boece,<sup>1</sup> Camden having been led, by Bellenden or otherwise, to confound the Narmin of the annalist with Nairn. In all probability, the "vestigia celeberrimæ olim arcis . . . nunc fluctibus obruta," noticed by Gordon of Straloch,<sup>2</sup> and laid down in the map of Moravia in Blaeu's Atlas, as "Ruins of ye Ald Castel," rest on no better foundation. Nairn may indeed have been at one time protected by some rude fortress now buried by the waves, since the old statist of the parish asserts that in his day there were persons still alive who remembered seeing vestiges of a building at spring tides;<sup>3</sup> but regarding its fortunes, both history and tradition are alike silent.

*Holinshed, Leslie, and Buchanan.*—All other notices of this invasion of Moray by the Northmen to be met with in our older historians, have been drawn entirely from the pages of Boece, and mainly, it would seem, from Bellenden's version. Holinshed (1570) copied the story at length into his "Scottish Chronicle," and, as was to be expected, names the fort Narne. Bishop Leslie (1578), in his brief notice of the event, makes only one reference to the stronghold, calling it *arx Nardensis*;<sup>4</sup> and as, in his "Regionum Scotiæ Descriptio," he mentions the *Nardina*<sup>5</sup> (Nairn) as one of the rivers of Moray, he too was probably influenced by the mistake of Bellenden. Buchanan (1582) relates the incident at greater length, though, like Leslie, he only mentions the fortress once; and, at a loss, apparently, to choose between the Narmin of Boece and the Narne of his translator, has adopted the form *Narnim* (*acc.*), as if from a nominative *Narnis*.<sup>6</sup> Being but a meagre summary of the narrative of the older writer, his account of the expedition does not furnish

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Britannia, ed. 1607, p. 715; and compare Boece, as quoted above. In the early editions of the "Britannia" the passage does not occur,—*e. g.*, that of 1600. Londini: G. Bishop.

<sup>2</sup> Joannis Blaeu Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, &c. Pars Quinta. Scotia et Hibernia, Amsteldami, 1654. P. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Sinclair's Statistical Account, vol. xii. p. 383. Edin. 1794.

<sup>4</sup> De Rebus Gestis Scotorum, authore Joanne Leslæo, p. 202. Romæ, 1578.

<sup>5</sup> Reg. et Insul. Scotiæ Descrip., p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> Rerum Scoticarum Historia, p. 156. Ed. Jac. Man. Aberdonia, 1762.

such conclusive proof of the identity of Narmin with Burghead; at the same time, owing to the general estimation in which the "*Rerum Scotticarum Historia*" was long held, it appears to have been the only authority consulted by those who have hitherto noticed the event, so that Bellen-den's mistake was thereby saved from an earlier exposure.

*Gordon of Straloch.*—In the map of ancient Scotland, by Gordon of Straloch, in "*Blaeu's Atlas*" (1653), Burghead is designated "Burgh olim Narmin," their identity being thus expressly recognised; while in that of modern Scotland by the same, it appears as "Burch;" and in the map of the four northern provinces, "The Burch." In the map of Moray (Moravia) in the same collection, the headland is laid down with sufficient distinctness, but there is no name attached to it. This, however, is an omission of either the engraver or the editor; for in the original draught by Pont, still preserved in the Advocates' Library, it is called "The Old Burgh." Accompanying this last map in the "*Atlas Scotiæ*," is a short topographical description of the province, in which we read:—  
 "— et in ora '*The Bruch*,' olim munita arce mari circumducto, rupi firmissimæ superposita, cum reliquum littus arenosum lit. Hinc nunc quoque in adversa Rossiaë, Sutherlandiaë, et Cathanesiaë littora quotidianus trajectus est. Proxima est Rosyll, ubi arenæ ventis mari excitæ non exiguam optimæ terræ portionem aratis subtraxerunt."<sup>1</sup>

*Pennant and Shaw.*—Passing over several incidental notices of Burghead, we find, in Pennant's "*Tour in Scotland, 1769*," a short description of it, in which the fortifications are ascribed to the "Danes."<sup>2</sup> This intelligent traveller does not seem to have visited the place in person, and was probably indebted for all he knew of it to the Rev. Lachlan Shaw of Elgin, who furnished him with the "*Account of Elgin and the Shire of Murray*," forming Appendix No. II. to the "*Tour*," and containing a notice of "*The Broch*," identical in substance with that to be found in Shaw's own "*History of the Province*," then preparing for publication. This latter work appeared at Edinburgh in 1775. In the chapter, entitled "*Military History of Moray*," we are furnished with an account of Burghead and its fortifications, in which he recognises it as the strong-

<sup>1</sup> *Blaeu's Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, &c.*, Scotia, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Tour in Scotland, 1769*, vol. iii. p. 169. London, 1790.

hold captured by the Northmen in the reign of Malcolm II. Referring to Buchanan's version of the incident, for Boece's was evidently unknown to him, he sensibly adds, "Our historians, not acquainted with the geography of the country, place this fort at Nairne, but no such promontory or fort was there, nor any tradition of it."<sup>1</sup> As Shaw was for fifteen years (1719-1734) minister of the adjoining parish of Cawdor, this last remark shows that few in Nairn or its neighbourhood had ever heard of the "Ruins" of Gordon's "Ald Castel."

*Cordiner.*—In 1776 the Rev. Charles Cordiner of Banff set out on his tour, the results of which he published four years afterwards in the thin quarto, "Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland." Letter X., dated "Forres, June 7th, 1776," contains his impressions of "the Burgh of Moray, a very antient and respectable fortress;" and Plate X. of the Illustrations which accompany the Letters, is a very incorrect and poorly executed sketch of the place, with a view of the headland as seen from the Bay. Like Shaw, he considers the fortifications to have been the work of the "Danes," referring to Buchanan for particulars; but the appearances of fire that presented themselves, led him to hazard a conjecture as to the time and cause of its final abandonment. It was probably, he thinks, "one of the border castles in Moray," burnt by "one Gillescop" in 1228, and "might be possessed by some Moravian Reguli, after it was evacuated by the Danes, in the reign of Malcolm II."<sup>2</sup> As an Appendix to his Letters, Cordiner gives certain "Extracts from Torfæus," professedly abridged from a MS. translation of the *Orcades* by the Rev. Alexander Pope, then minister of Reay, which had been placed at his disposal for that purpose. In the first of these, the fort of Burghead is represented as having been built by Sigurd, a Norwegian chief, said to have invaded Moray, "circa A.D. 830,"—an assertion neither consistent with his own text, nor warranted by that of Torfæus; and in another it is stated to be the "Eccialsbacca" of the same writer. These so-called "Extracts" are merely commentaries on portions of Torfæus, in which unpardonable liberties have been taken with his historical labours. Cordiner complains, that "this abridgment cost him more pains than all the rest of his work." Who is to blame for its misrepresentations, can only

<sup>1</sup> Shaw's History of the Province of Moray. Edin., 1775.

<sup>2</sup> Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland, &c., p. 58. London, 1780.

be determined by comparing it with Pope's MS., if the latter is still in existence.<sup>1</sup>

*General Roy.*—Sometime in the year 1747, a general survey of Scotland was undertaken by the Government of the day, at the suggestion of the Duke of Cumberland. This important work was put under the superintendence of Quartermaster-General Watson, but was mainly executed by Lieutenant, afterwards Major-General, Roy. For two summers he was engaged in it singly, having commenced operations in the neighbourhood of Fort Augustus in the year just mentioned; his progress, however, was so satisfactory, that in 1749 several young officers of engineers were put under his directions, and by 1752 the greater part of the Highlands was surveyed. Before the close of 1755 they had completed the whole of Scotland, "except the Isles and some small spots in the Highlands;" and on the death of General Watson, in 1761, all the maps and plans of the survey were deposited in the King's Library. Meantime Roy had greatly distinguished himself in the course of the Seven Years' War; and having returned to England on its termination, he got access, by particular desire of George III., to the results of the survey, with the view of publishing an improved map of Scotland on a reduced scale. But other duties intervened, and "to the public only remains the map inserted in his *Military Antiquities*."<sup>2</sup> In this map, which was engraved about the year 1774, and of which a few copies got

<sup>1</sup> Among unpublished papers in the archives of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, is a letter from Pope to the Secretary, dated "Reay, March 13th, 1781," from which the following is an extract:—"I have made an abridgment, in English, of the history of these northern parts, published in Latin by Torfaeus. It contains the remotest accounts of published transactions from the ninth to the thirteenth century; and in these are many particulars which are not mentioned in any of our national histories. I have wrot several remarks upon it which are entertaining. Mr Pennant had the perusal of this manuscript, and he sent it to Mr Cordiner at Banff, in order to fill up his Supplement to Mr Pennant's Tour. I have wrot to Mr Geo. Paton at the Custom-House to get it, and I presume it is in his hands ere now, or will be very soon. If the Honble Society please to call for that manuscript, Mr Paton will give it." It appears, therefore, that Pope's work was an abridgment, *not* a translation.

<sup>2</sup> Memoir relative to the construction of the Map of Scotland, 1807, by Arrowsmith, pp. 7, 11.

into circulation at that time among Roy's private friends,<sup>1</sup> Burghead is laid down as a Roman station, under the name of Ptoroton. How Roy was led to such a conclusion, he himself has left on record.

Writing about A.D. 160, Ptolemy of Alexandria has noted the following among the features of the north-east coast of Scotland :—

Κελνίου ποταμοῦ ἐκβολαί	Οὐάραρ εἴσχυσις
Τούαισις εἴσχυσις	Λόξα ποταμοῦ ἐκβολαί.

And among the Northern tribes he enumerates as dwelling over or beyond (ὑπὲρ) the Caledonians Proper, the Οὐακομάγοι, whose towns (πόλεις) were

Βανατία	Πτερωτὸν στρατόπεδον
Τάμεια	Τούαισις. <sup>2</sup>

Of these last, Πτερωτὸν στρατόπεδον (*Castra alata*, "The Winged Camp") seems to have been the most important; it being the only Scottish locality among the three in Britain whose distances from Alexandria are specially mentioned in the eighth book of the Geography.<sup>3</sup>

The Οὐάραρ εἴσχυσις (the Estuary of the Varar) has been very generally recognised as the Moray Firth; and the Οὐακομάγοι (Vacomagi) as having occupied a part of Scotland corresponding to the modern shires of Banff, Moray, and part of Inverness, though the correctness of these opinions is by no means certain; but various conjectures have been advanced regarding the position of "The Winged Camp." Hector Boece identified it with Castle Urquhart at the Northern extremity of Loch Ness;<sup>4</sup> Camden, with Edinburgh;<sup>5</sup> Gordon of Straloch, with Nairn;<sup>6</sup> Sir John Clerk, with Cramond (Alaterva);<sup>7</sup> and Horsley, with Tain.<sup>8</sup> But in Roy's Map, this and every other disputed point as to

<sup>1</sup> Gough's Brit. Topography, vol. ii., p. 586. London, 1780.

<sup>2</sup> Claud. Ptol. Geog., lib. ii., cap. 3, §§ 6 and 13. Ed. Nobbe, Lipsiæ, 1843.

<sup>3</sup> Cl. Ptol. Geog., lib. viii., cap. 3, § 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Vide* Scotia Regionum Nomina, prefixed to Boece's Scotorum Historia.

<sup>5</sup> Britannia (Lond., 1600), p. 739.

<sup>6</sup> *Vide* Remarks on Scotia Antiqua, in Blaeu's Atlas, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon's Itiner. Septent. Appendix, p. 183. London, 1727.

<sup>8</sup> Britannia Romana, p. 364. London, 1732.

Ptolemy's Scottish Tables appear to be definitely cleared up; while at the same time it contains names, as for instance the new designation of the promontory, not to be found in any ancient writer whose works have come down to us. To explain this a short digression is necessary.

It was at the very time that the survey of Scotland was approaching completion, that the discovery, real or pretended, was made at Copenhagen, of the treatise "De Situ Britanniaë," represented as the composition of Richard of Cirencester, an English monk of the fourteenth century. According to this new authority, the whole of Scotland east of the Great Caledonian Valley, and between Antonine's Wall and the Moray Firth, was conquered by the Romans in the reign of Domitian, and erected into a province named, in honour of his family, *Vespasiana*. Of this province the chief city is said to have been Ptoroton, a town of the Vacomagi, situated at the mouth of the Varar, on the coast. Other towns of the same tribe, who are stated to have dwelt along the Varar, were Tuessis, Tamea, and Banatia, as with Ptolemy; and in the Itinerary of the unknown Roman General appended to the Treatise, all these, except Banatia, are set down as Roman Stations, and two others added within their territories, Varis and Ad Tuessim. *Vespasiana* is further represented as having been traversed by two distinct Iters, which diverged at Orrea, in Perthshire, and met at "Ultima Ptoroton," on the Varar, the one proceeding from Orrea, along the coast, and the other by the mountainous interior.<sup>1</sup>

It is scarcely necessary to remark that these are all assertions which receive no support whatever from the historians of antiquity. Except Diodorus Siculus,<sup>2</sup> who knew that Britain terminated towards the north in a promontory called Ὀρκὰς, no ante-Ptolemaic author has mentioned a single locality in Scotland north of the Tay. Tacitus distinctly states that Agricola, after the battle of Mons Grampius, fell back on the line of forts he had previously erected on the isthmus of the Forth and Clyde, contenting himself with issuing orders to the commander of the Roman fleet, then at anchor in the Firth of Tay, to proceed northwards on that voyage of discovery in the course of which the island was circumnavigated; but makes no mention of any port at which the expedition

<sup>1</sup> De Situ Britanniaë, p. 54. Lond., 1809.

<sup>2</sup> Diodorus Siculus, lib. v., cap. 8.

touched, with the exception of the "Trutulensian Harbour," and the Orkney Islands, boastfully said to have been then subdued.<sup>1</sup> On the recall of Agricola, the greater part of his conquests were immediately lost;<sup>2</sup> nor do we read of any attempt to recover them till the reign of Antoninus Pius, whose lieutenant, Lollius Urbicus, is said by Julius Capitolinus to have erected (*circa* A.D. 138), on the line of Agricola's forts, that extensive work known as Antonine's Wall, intending it as a barrier against the inroads of the Northern Clans. "Per legatos suos," writes Capitolinus, "plurima bella gessit; nam et Britannos per Lollium Urbicum legatum vicit, alio muro cespititio submotis barbaris ducto;"—words which expressly intimate that this wall was the northern limit of the conquests of Urbicus.<sup>3</sup> Of Severus's expedition there is no need to speak, since it did not take place till half a century after the time of Ptolemy, and a whole one after that of Domitian.

We learn from the "Military Antiquities," that during the nine years (1747 to 1765) its author was engaged in the survey, he frequently availed himself of the opportunities afforded him of indulging his antiquarian predilections.<sup>4</sup> Differences of opinion regarding the site of the battle-field of Mons Grampius having led him to turn his attention to Tacitus' account of Agricola's campaigns, he became favourably impressed by an idea, first advanced in 1754 by a brother officer, that "for reasons of war," the engagement must have been fought in the neighbourhood of Stonehaven. The discovery at the same time of certain camps in the district of Strathmore, which were at once set down as Roman, stimulated Roy to prosecute the inquiry; and during the summer of 1775 his collection of plans of ancient camps was largely augmented. The Seven Years' War put a stop for a time to his researches, but they were resumed on his return home in 1764, and continued, as occasion offered, for the next ten years. In the interval, however, the "De Situ Britanniae" had made its appearance. Stukeley, its English editor, supplied notes, in which he pointed out "the present names of new places" in the southern part of the island, but attempted little in regard to those in Scotland,

<sup>1</sup> Tac. Agric., chaps. x. and xxxviii.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. Hist., book i. chap. ii.

<sup>3</sup> Jul. Cap., as quoted by Gordon, Itiner. Septen., p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> Roy's Military Antiquities (published by Soc. Antiq. London, 1793), Pref. p. vi.



having left the fixing of them "to such as are acquainted with that country, and who have opportunities of making private inquiries on the spot."<sup>1</sup> It was this hint which first suggested to Roy the composition of the "Military Antiquities." Implicitly believing in the genuineness and authenticity of the work, and relying on his knowledge of the relative situation of places, and the nature of the country in general, as sufficiently qualifying him for the task, he at once enlarged his plan, which had been originally confined to a review of Agricola's campaigns, so as to include, besides other subjects, an elaborate commentary on those portions of the "De Situ Britanniaë," which relate to the Roman topography of Scotland.

In carrying out the latter part of this design, Roy assigned to the Vacomagi of the treatise a great part of Aberdeenshire, all Banff, Moray, and Nairn, together with parts of Inverness-shire. Their principal rivers, the Tuessis and the Celnus, he considered to be the Spey and the Deveron respectively; and in order to fix the situation of their towns he had recourse to the ninth and tenth Iters of the Itinerary, and the distances there specified.<sup>2</sup> The assumption that Tuessis was the Spey, gave approximately the position of two Vacomagian towns, inasmuch as both the Tuessis of the ninth and the Ad Tuessim of the tenth of the so-called Iters must have stood on or near its banks. As the exact site of the former, Roy fixed on Gordon Castle, on no better grounds than its proximity to the Spey, as well as to the coast. The distance between this station and "Ptoroton" being left blank in the Itinerary, the position of the latter had to be otherwise determined; and his reasons for fixing on Burghead may be given in his own words:—"This promontory," he says, "being distant from Tuessis or Gordon Castle fourteen and one-half English, or near sixteen Roman miles, which agrees perfectly well with the common length of Richard's stages, standing exactly at the mouth of the Moray Firth, being strong by nature, and still showing such conspicuous vestiges of works of art, must therefore have been

<sup>1</sup> Roy's Military Antiquities, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> The following are the three last stations of the ninth, and the three first of the tenth Iter (so-called):—

Ad Selinam, ——. |  
 Tuessis, XVIII. |  
 Ptorotone, ——. |

Ab ultima Ptorotone (to) |  
 Varis, VIII. |  
 Ad Tuessim, XXVIII. |

the Ultima Ptoroton of the Romans.<sup>1</sup> To the same effect, in his remarks on the tenth Iter, he adds,—“The first stage is Varis, eight miles from Ultima Ptoroton. Setting out, therefore, from the Burgh-head, southward eight English, that is to say, about eight and a half Roman miles, will bring us to Foress. The near agreement in distance, and the striking similarity of names, the *v* of the one being softened into *f* of the other, leave no room to doubt that Foress is the ancient Varis; and hence, all circumstances taken together, the Burgh-head is proved, beyond all doubt, to be the Roman Ptoroton.”<sup>2</sup> In plate xxxiii. of the “Military Antiquities,” Roy gave an accurate and beautiful plan of the fortifications as they existed in his day; and plate xxxiv. is a map showing the relative situations of Tarbetness, Burgh-head, and Forres.

Such are the conclusions at which General Roy arrived regarding the early history of Burghead—based, as will be seen, on two assumptions, the authenticity of the “De Situ Britanniaë,” and the Roman origin of the fortifications. The former of these raises a question which it is unnecessary to discuss here; since, if it can be shown, that the latter is untenable, it will follow, either that Roy has erred, or that Bertram’s “discovery,” if not a forgery, is worse than useless as a guide to the history and antiquities of these northern parts.

But it may still be asked, Are there any reasons apart from those of Roy for believing that Burghead is the Πτερωτὸν στρατόπεδον of Ptolemy? Its position on the copies of the map of Britain appended to some editions of the Geography certainly affords no support to such an opinion; for it there stands inland, and at some distance from the left bank of a large river, which is represented as falling into the sea between the estuaries of the Τούαισις, and the Ουάραρ. Moreover, the name occurs in his Tables, not among the features of the coast, but as one of the towns (πόλεις) of the Ουάκομάγοι; and it can only be placed on a headland in defiance of the authority of the Ptolemaic map, which on such a point is probably of some value. How “The Winged Camp” came to be so called, it were useless to inquire, while so much doubt exists as to the sources whence the Alexandrian geographer drew the materials for his work. In this country it has generally been taken for granted, that he owed his know-

<sup>1</sup> Roy’s Military Antiquities, pp. 131–32.

<sup>2</sup> Id., p. 132.

ledge of the north of Scotland to the voyage performed by Agricola's fleet; but the point is by no means established. From his own admission, the treatise is based on an earlier one of the same nature by one Marinus of Tyre,<sup>1</sup> now lost; whence it has been maintained by Brehmer, that the "Geography" is to be regarded as in substance the production of the latter, Ptolemy having merely made some additions and corrections; and that the maps must have been founded on an ancient Tyrian atlas, constructed from the reports of Phœnician and Carthaginian navigators.<sup>2</sup> Our knowledge of their maritime exploits, as well as of the circumstances under which Ptolemy composed his work, being exceedingly slender, it is perhaps impossible to arrive at any satisfactory decision on the subject. The question bears, however, more directly on the possible identity of Burghead with "The Winged Camp," than may appear at first sight. Geologists are by no means agreed as to the changes that have taken place in the relative level of sea and land around our coasts since the dawn of the historic period, though recent researches seem to prove that these are considerable; so that whatever was the case at the time that Agricola's fleet dropped anchor in the Moray Firth, few will venture to assert that the promontory was anything more than a lonely rock when the enterprise of the Phœnicians may have led them, a thousand years earlier, to visit these distant shores.

*Rev. J. Grant of Elgin.*—In the year 1787—six years *before* the appearance of the "Military Antiquities"—there was read before the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, a "Memoir concerning the Roman Progress in Scotland to the North of the Grampians," by the Rev. John Grant, then minister of Boharm, formerly of Dundurcas, and afterwards of Elgin. Referring to a "Letter from Mr Barclay of Urie to the Earl of Buchan," published in their Transactions, under the date of January 11, 1785, which contains a description of Roman camps and other "monuments" of a great battle supposed to have been fought in the neighbourhood of Stonehaven, and in which the hypothesis is put forward, "that the Romans, some time or other, extended their conquests as far north as the Murray Frith;"<sup>3</sup> the author of the "Memoir" quotes it as "having established an opinion he had long entertained." Having then

<sup>1</sup> Cl. Ptol. Geog., lib. i. chap. vi.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* Appendix ii. to Heeren's *Asiatic Researches*, vol. ii.

<sup>3</sup> *Vide* *Archæologia Scotica*, vol. i. pp. 565-569. Edin. 1792.

taken as his guide the "De Situ Britanniae," he proceeds to illustrate those portions of it which relate to the northern part of the province of Vespasiana, setting down its towns for the most part in exactly the same situations as those assigned to them in Roy's map; and, in particular, recognising Burghead as the "the *Ptoroton (sic) stratopedon* of Ptolemy." This paper remained in the archives of the Society till 1822, when it appeared in the second volume of their Transactions, published in that year.<sup>1</sup> Meantime the author, who died in 1814, had printed the substance of it in a work, the joint production of himself and the Rev. William Leslie of St Andrews-Lhanbryde, brought out in 1798 by the late Isaac Forsyth, Esq., then a bookseller in Elgin, and entitled "A Survey of the Province of Moray, Historical, Geographical, and Political." Of this volume it will be found that the first section of the second chapter, headed "Roman Progress," consists of the "Memoir," with a few alterations and additions.

On perusing the "Memoir," one cannot help being struck with the remarkable agreement between the view the author gives of "Roman Progress" in Scotland, and that advanced by Roy on the same question; and yet no reference is made to the Map by the latter, of which, however, according to Gough, some copies had got into private circulation thirteen years previous to the date of the "Memoir." In the "Survey," indeed, there is an apparently incidental allusion to "a map that General Roy published several years ago;" but no admission that the author was under any obligations to it. As there seemed no reason why he should appropriate the result of Roy's labours without due acknowledgment, the general harmony of their views on so doubtful a subject was at first inexplicable. Having heard, however, that Grant had bequeathed his MSS. to Cullen House library, and having, through the kind intervention of W. G. Bryson, Esq., received permission from the Earl of Seafield to examine them, the present writer found that the matter admitted of an easy explanation. Among the papers is a large quarto MS. volume, prepared for the press, and entitled "Britannia Antiqua;"<sup>2</sup> consisting of an Introduction, in

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* *Archæologia Scotica*, vol. ii. pp. 31-42. Edin. 1822.

<sup>2</sup> More fully:—"Britannia Antiqua or British History and Antiquities, Illustrated by a Collection of Passages and Historical Facts, in the Original Languages, from the Ancient Greek and Roman Writers; together with the Dissertation of Richard, a Monk of Westf., concerning the Ancient Geography of and Roman Stations

which a general survey is taken of the early history of the north of Scotland, followed by extracts of all the passages in the Greek and Roman historians and poets in which any allusion is made to Britain, together with the "De Situ Britanniae" entire. Three maps of Britain are said by the author to accompany the treatise—Ptolemy's, Richard's, and North Britain as known to the Romans. The first is wanting; but the latter<sup>1</sup> is fortunately complete, and proves to be *an exact copy of Roy's map*, save only that the mountain chains, and some unimportant names of places, are omitted, and one or two others, equally unimportant, added. Its size, its lines of latitude and longitude, and the outline of the coast, which correspond most accurately with Roy; the positions, as well as the ancient and modern names of the various provinces and towns; and the designations of the promontories and other features of the country, in all of which respects the two maps are identical, preclude the supposition that they were taken from any common source, and demonstrate beyond a doubt that Grant's is merely a pen-and-ink fac-simile of that of Roy. In the Introduction or Preface, which must have been written about 1781, and which, it may be remarked, contains the first draft of the "Memoir," this map is said to be founded on the most recent observations;<sup>2</sup> but, for whatever reason, there is no more definite reference to the source whence it was so obviously obtained.

*George Chalmers.*—In the "Caledonia" of George Chalmers (1810), which was long believed to have left so many vexed questions of Scottish history, to use the author's own words, "elaborated into detail, and illustrated into light," Roy's views regarding Burghead were implicitly adopted. Finding it further advisable to condescend on a date for the conquest of Vespasiana, he maintains, following up a hint dropped by his rival Pinkerton, that it must have been effected by Lollius Urbicus, although the little we know of this officer's acts expressly contradicts in Britain; to which are added his Map of the Island, one according to Ptolemy, and a third, of the Roman Stations in Scotland, with their Modern Names." By John Grant, A.M., Minister of Dundurcas.—(*MS. in Cullen House Library, 1862.*)

<sup>1</sup> Titled, "Britannia Septentrionalis Romana TABULA, Secundum Richardum Monachum, West<sup>r</sup>., et Recentiores Observationes."

<sup>2</sup> "The other map is that of Scotland, according to modern observations, with a great number of Roman camps, stations, and towns, collected from accurate surveys, or particular inquiries that may be depended on."—*Britannia Antiqua (MS. Cullen House Library), Preface, p. xxi.*

such an opinion. Chalmers, notwithstanding, "elaborated into detail" a supposed campaign by Urbicus, at the conclusion of which every "inhabitant of North Britain who resided along the east coast, from the Tweed to the Murray Firth," might, as we are gravely told, "have claimed, like St Paul, every privilege which peculiarly belonged to a Roman citizen!"<sup>1</sup>

That "the Danes" as well as the Romans may have been concerned in the raising of the fortifications of Burghead, was admitted both by Roy and Chalmers; the former believing that the whole had been at first the work of the earlier people, but probably altered in some degree by the Scots as well as Danes; while the latter considered, that though the ditches guarding the entrance were obviously Roman, the rampart of the upper area was as undoubtedly "Danish."

It is unnecessary to extend this sketch by referring at length to Pinkerton<sup>2</sup> (in his *second* edition), Professor Stuart (of Aberdeen),<sup>3</sup> the late Mr Stuart of Glasgow,<sup>4</sup> Worsaae,<sup>5</sup> and others, who, following Roy and Chalmers, have pronounced Burghead to be an old Roman station, re-occupied as a stronghold by the Norsemen. Even Dr Daniel Wilson, while giving it as his opinion that its character is that of a "British fort," adds, that the straight wall and rounded angles of the north rampart bear some relation to the legionary earthworks.<sup>6</sup> More noteworthy is it that Mr William Rhind of Edinburgh, in his "Sketches of Moray," had the boldness to deny, though without assigning any reasons, "the probability of the Romans ever having had any permanent footing in Moray."<sup>7</sup>

But while antiquaries were indulging in such romantic speculations regarding the fortunes of Burghead, its genuine history lay unread on the bleak surface of the promontory, in leaves already torn and defaced, and soon to be scattered like those of the sibyl of old. To these records, or rather such of them as can still be collected, it is now time to turn.

<sup>1</sup> Caledonia, vol. i. p. 116. London, 1810.

<sup>2</sup> Pinkerton's Inquiry (2d edition; Edinburgh, 1814), Advertisement, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Archæologia Scotica, vol. ii. p. 289 *et seq.*

<sup>4</sup> Caledonia Romana, p. 214 (2d edition, Edinburgh, 1852).

<sup>5</sup> Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland, and Ireland. London, 1852.

<sup>6</sup> Prehist. Ann. of Scotland, p. 411. Edinburgh, 1851.

<sup>7</sup> Sketches of Moray, p. 66. Edinburgh, 1839.

*Mr Macdonald's paper on "Burghead" will be continued in the next  
Part of the "Proceedings."*