

## II.

NOTICE OF A CIRCULAR STRUCTURE, KNOWN AS "EDIN'S HALL,"  
ON COCKBURN LAW, ONE OF THE LAMMERMOOR HILLS. BY  
JOHN STUART, Esq., LL.D., SEC. S.A. SCOT. (PLATES I. AND II.)

Cockburn Law is one of the hills of the Lammermoor, rising from the south bank of the Whiteadder to a height of rather more than a thousand feet above the level of the sea, about a mile below Abbey St Bathans. On its summit is one of the circular camps so common on the range of the Lammermoor and on many of the Cheviots; and on its northern declivity, at an elevation of about 250 feet above the channel of the stream, is placed the curious ruin to which I wish at present to direct the attention of the Society, not merely for its intrinsic interest, but on account of its ruinous condition, which demands immediate intervention, if its destruction is not to be complete.

On the shoulder of the hill, to which I have referred, is a platform projecting somewhat from its mass, and overhanging the Whiteadder, down to which it slopes with a rapid declivity. On the north-west it has a deep hollow, and on the east an irregular and less defined depression, while on the south it is overhung by the Law.

On this platform, which is of an undulating and uneven character, is placed a series of circular foundations within a wall of stone, the whole being surrounded by a double earthen rampart, with a ditch on the outside and another between the ramparts. From the edge of the outer ditch, on the south-west side, a wall without trenches runs down the hollow on the west, till it reaches the top of a small ravine descending to the river.

The principal building on the platform is a circular erection of about ninety feet in exterior diameter, constructed of large whinstone blocks on the outside of the wall, with a packing of small stones at the joints. The walls vary in thickness from 15 to 19 feet.

In the end of last century, a low and narrow passage, on the east side, of about 17 feet in length, covered with large stones, led through the

wall to the open central space. It has, however, been destroyed for many years, and the stones have been used for building dikes. In the heart of the circular wall are three chambers, which are now so filled up with rubbish, as to give the building the appearance of a ruined cairn, but a little examination reveals the lines of large stones, which formed the sides of these chambers, and enables us to trace their shape and size. In breadth they are about 7 feet, and in length they are respectively about 33 and 23 feet, with circular ends. They were entered from the central space by a passage about 3 feet in width. There are other two cells, one on each side of the entrance passage, on the east, of the same breadth as the others, and other vacant spaces in the wall, of less determinate form, are also of the width of 7 feet.

In the interior court are several square holes in the ground.<sup>1</sup>

Mr Blackadder, a local land-surveyor in the end of last century, says, that at the time of his examination in 1793, the cells were quite distinct, and apparently had been closed at the top with large stones in the form of an arch.<sup>2</sup> Another observer, who visited the ruin about the year 1811, states that the circular walls were then about 8 or 10 feet high, and that two of the cells in the wall were covered at the top by one stone overlapping another.<sup>3</sup>

Eastward from the main building, just described, are the foundations of several circular buildings of various sizes, which are now so overgrown with turf as to make it difficult to trace them out, but are shown on a sketch of them, made many years ago by Mr Milne Home, which is now exhibited. As I have said, the whole of the erections are surrounded by two earthen ramparts and ditches.

The principal building, with its intramural cells, has long been known as "*Edin's Hall*," a name of uncertain derivation, and which probably we have not now got in its earliest form. The sound of the word has suggested various attributions of the building;—as to Edwin, the king of Northumbria, as his palace; to Ectin, a supposed giant, as his "*hald*;" to the god Woden, as his temple. By others it has been held to be a temple of the god Terminus; a station for an army of observation against the

<sup>1</sup> These were first noticed by Mr George Tate in 1861. See Transactions of the Berwickshire Nat. Club, 1856-62, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> Idem. 1850-56, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Idem. 1856-62, p. 249.

Danes ; a storehouse of provisions for a chain of camps on the Lammermoors ; and, lastly, a temple of the Druids, who are rarely omitted in such speculations.

The earliest notice of Edin's Hall is to be found in the Scots Magazine, for 1764 (p. 431), and it is so grotesquely inaccurate that I am induced to quote parts of it. The writer informs us that among the mass of ruins, almost every stone has some irregular figure cut upon it, and not one of these figures resembles another. "I believe," he says, "for my part, that the upper part of every stone has been cut to receive the convexities and ragged surface of its fellow, and that this is the whole mystery of the figures."

It is hardly necessary to remark that no such figures could ever have been seen, and the idea has obviously been suggested by the occurrence of lewis holes in the square freestone blocks of which "Arthur's Oven," then recently destroyed, was formed, and to which "Edin's Hall" came to be likened.

The writer proceeds—"The form of it is three concentric circles, 6 or 7 feet distant one from another, and the diameter of the innermost is about 20 feet." This again is entirely imaginary ; and the long narrow chamber in the wall, with their circular ends, are called "square holes." It is further stated that there were two entries, one on the south, and another on the south-west, whereas there was only one on the east.

In Sinclair's Statistical Account of the Parish of Dunse, the building is also described much in the same style. It is said that the stones are very large, "and are all ground into one another ; that is, the concavity of the one receiving the convexity of the other, so that they are locked together, and yet all these locks are different. It consists of three concentric circles, the diameter of the innermost being 40 feet : " that is an increase of 20 feet over the account of 1764.

Much of this is also repeated in the description given by Chalmers in his Caledonia, vol. ii. p. 211.

I refer to these accounts partly for the purpose of cautioning inquirers against trusting to the descriptions of such objects of last century, and as a contrast to the careful and detailed account of the ruins by the late Mr George Turnbull of Abbey St Bathans, to which I have been much indebted in preparing this sketch. The two Plates (I. and II.) which

illustrate this paper have been copied from those in Mr Turnbull's notice. I have also been favoured by Sir Henry James with a tracing from the Ordnance Survey of Edin's Hall, which will enable the Members to understand the general features of the site.

Without further reference to the guesses which the word "Edin," as applied to the main building, has suggested, I think I may safely say that the remains on Cockburn Law are those of early British times, and probably represent the settlement of a chief amid the members of his tribe.

Among the glens, and on the hill-tops of the Cheviots and other portions of the border range, are groups of circular hut foundations surrounded by walls. At Linhope these clusters are undoubtedly the remains of a British village, and are so entire that its plan can easily be traced; but I do not know any of these remains which are so suggestive of a tribal settlement as the present.

But besides this, the remains on Cockburn Law have a very *peculiar* interest, inasmuch as, in shape and constructional arrangement, "Edin's Hall" is identical with many of the Pictish castles or "brochs" in Orkney, Shetland, the Hebrides, and in the counties of Ross, Sutherland, and Caithness,—the only difference being that its size is considerably greater than that of the brochs. In some of the latter, the chambers in the wall are of the same shape as at "Edin's Hall," as in the broch of Okstrow, in Orkney, of which a drawing by Sir Henry Dryden is exhibited, while in others they are circular. The chambers in the brochs, which occur on the ground story, are surmounted by galleries and other chambers in higher walls. Whether "Edin's Hall" had upper stories cannot now be known, but it is supposed that its original height was considerable, from the quantity of materials rolled down the bank, and from what still lies within and around the building.<sup>1</sup>

The remarkable thing is, that no instance of a broch has hitherto been found in any other country than the parts of Scotland to which I have just referred, and that this isolated example on the Lammermoor is the single exception.

This, however, is not the only case in which examples of other early Scottish remains have been found, almost equally isolated from the localities

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Turnbull's Account, Berwickshire Nat. Soc. Proc. *ut ant.* p. 13.

which may be called their native place, and the facts connected with them,<sup>1</sup> although very worthy of being noticed, are not easy of explanation.

With regard to the age of brochs, and by implication of "Edin's Hall," while objects of very various eras have been found in them, indicating long continued occupation, there are relative facts which seem to carry back their origin to a remote period. One of the most striking of these occurs in Mr Petrie's account of the broch of Birsay, in Orkney. An examination of this structure showed that at some early period it had become ruinous, and that in course of time the fallen stones had been overgrown with soil to the depth of several feet. The "broch" had thus presented the appearance of a green mound, and it was then selected as a place of interment by a people who buried their dead in short stone cists, and deposited bronze ornaments with them. In some of the many cists placed on the broch burned bones appeared; and in one a piece of a bronze fibula was found, with a fragment of some other bronze object, thus presenting the same appearances as the sepulchral deposits in the stone circles and cairns of our earliest time.

I had the opportunity in last October of paying a second visit to "Edin's Hall" in company with Mr Milne Home and Mr Turnbull. We were all impressed with a sense of the peculiar interest of the ruins, and distressed at the continued dilapidations which threaten to remove all trace of them. From time to time proposals have been made for clearing away the rubbish, but hitherto without success.

I rejoice that the prospect of something effectual being done is now brighter. The consent of the landlord has been obtained for any necessary operations being carried out, and Mr Milne Home has no doubt of being able to obtain by subscription sufficient funds.

It seems to me that these operations must include—

1. A substantial fence, which shall cut off Cockburn Law from the adjoining field.
2. The clearing out of rubbish from the chambers in the hall of the main building, and from the foundations of all the buildings.
3. The covering the surface of the walls of Edin's Hall with turf, so as

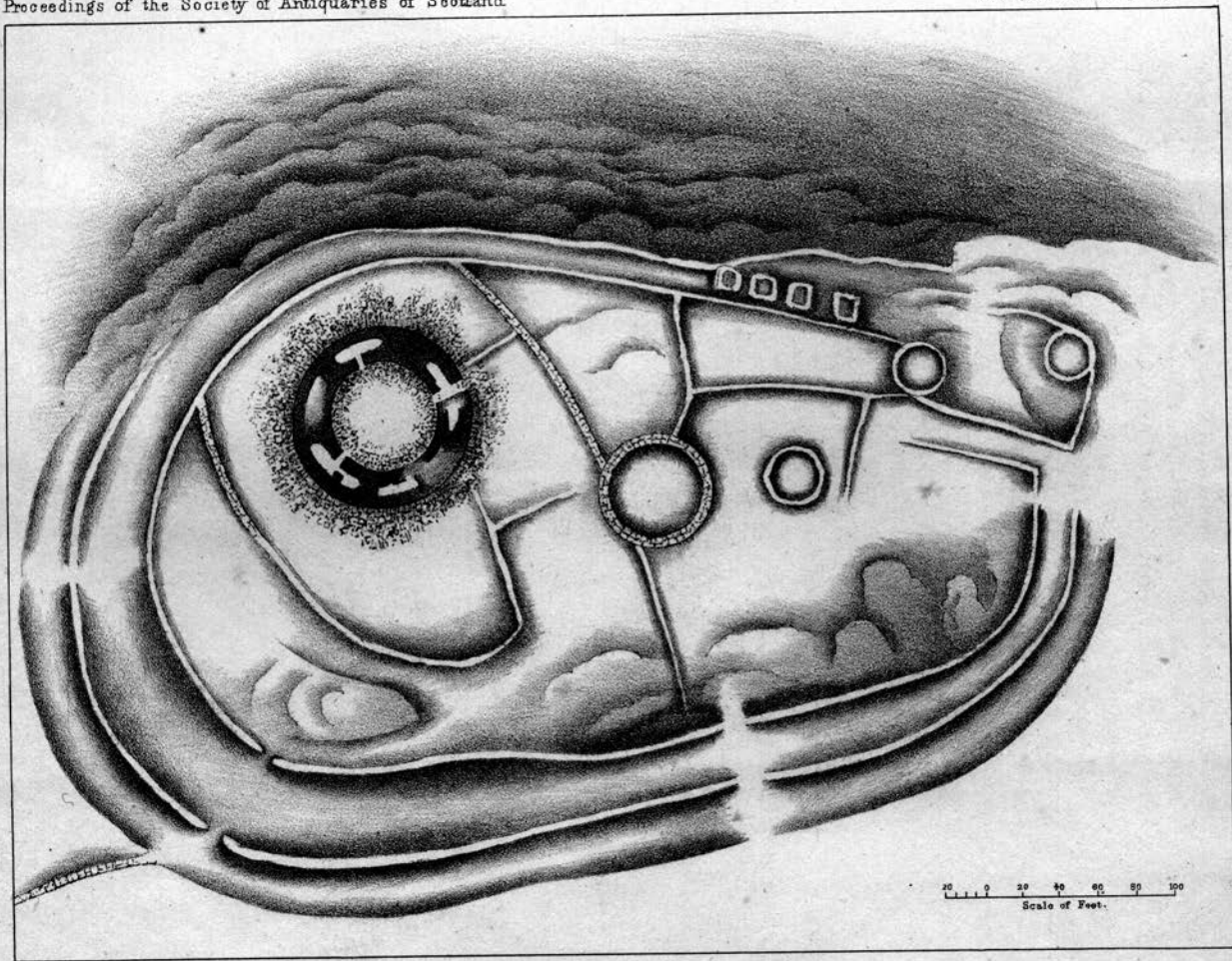
<sup>1</sup> Some of these will be found in the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," vol. ii. pp. 4, 45, *notes*.

to prevent any further displacement of the loose stones of which they are composed.

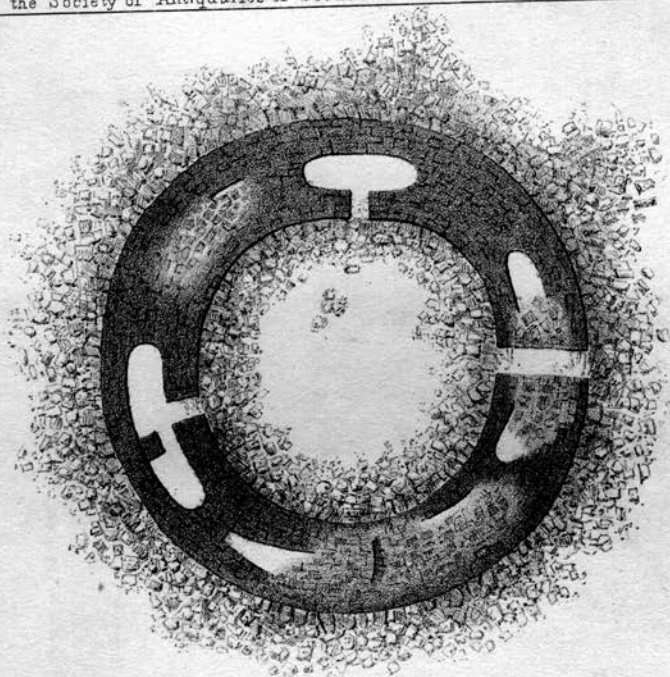
4. Careful excavations in the central area, and in other spots of the ruins, in search of objects likely to illustrate the condition of the former occupants, such as have been found in many of the northern brochs.

After all this has been done, I would suggest that the Society should obtain an accurate ground plan of the ruins, and at present I conclude by proposing that we should vote a sum of £5 towards the fund to be raised for the execution of the necessary operations.

On Mr STUART'S suggestion, the Society cordially approved of Mr Milne Home's plan for clearing out and preserving the very curious remains in question, and voted a sum of £5 towards the necessary expense of doing so.

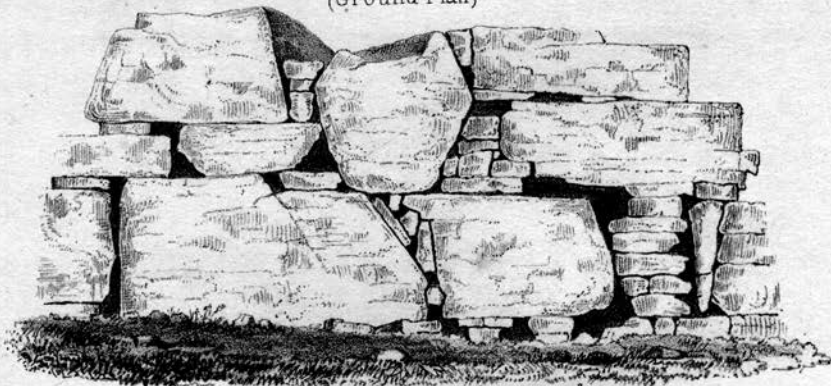


EDIN'S HALL,  
BERWICKSHIRE.



Scale of Feet  
10 20 30 40 50

Principal Building of Edin's Hall.  
(Ground Plan)



Scale of Feet  
1 2

Masonry of Edin's Hall.

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