

## III.

ON THE ROUND CASTLES AND ANCIENT DWELLINGS OF THE VALLEY OF THE FORTH, AND ITS TRIBUTARY THE TEITH. BY MISS C. MACLAGAN. COMMUNICATED BY JOHN STUART, Esq., LL.D., SEC. S.A. SCOT. (PLATES I.—III.)

As the earliest historic notices of Scotland have come to us from the pens of its Roman invaders, it may be that this fact has been the cause, though certainly it is not a good reason, why our modern writers have so long and largely turned their attention to everything Roman which can be traced on the soil of Caledonia, and in their abounding zeal for that people, have willingly given over to their credit many works to which they can justly lay no claim, and, at the same time, have passed over with most unpatriotic neglect the remains which tell to us, their children, of how our "rude forefathers," with noble resolve, withstood the military skill and prowess of the soldiers who had subdued the world.

The following notes and sketches are a small contribution towards the knowledge of the British antiquities of the region which lies nearest to the wall of Antoninus, and chiefly treat of the castles and other strengths of the valley of the Forth.

On the northern slope of land ascending from the banks of the Carron and of the Bonny rivers, and confronting the Roman wall, having only a narrow but deep morass between them and it, there certainly had stood a complete and long line of British defences. Gordon, in his "Itinerarium Septentrionale," mentions them in detail, and in describing them, proves to us that they were of British "build," and yet, at the same time, he calls them Roman. These forts we incline to term the *first line* of defence; but as the writer has not yet sufficiently examined it, in the meantime it is passed over, and these notes begin with what might be called the second line.

This second line is ranged along the southern side of the valley of the Forth, and the first round castle which falls to be mentioned on that line is the one now known as the Tappock.

*The Tappock.*—The hill on which it stands has a gentle slope towards the valley of the Carron on the south side, and towards the valley of the Forth on the north and east, but to the west it presents a bold precipitous

front, and on the brink of that precipice this building is situated. The whole of this and of many surrounding hills was formerly covered by the Great Torwood, said to have been the latest lingering remains of the primeval forest of Caledonia ; and it is somewhat noteworthy, that during many successive and comparatively modern ages, we find it said of one defeated army after another, in the history of the national wars, that the fugitives found refuge in the Torwood. Can it be that they fled to the Tappock and its neighbouring strongholds ?

When we think of the impenetrable forest, the rugged mountain land, and the long covered ways leading to the strong dark doorways of these castles, we can perceive how difficult it must have been for the Romans to drive out from these their "*boroughs*," even though near to their own quarters, a warlike people so lodged and so hidden.

The following are the dimensions of this structure :—

The area of the inner circle is 33 feet in diameter at the lower portion of the wall. It is two feet greater in the upper portion, for after the wall rises to about 8 feet in height, it then, with most regular masonry, retires one foot all round the building, and then continues perpendicularly to 5 or 6 feet higher, but evidently this wall had once been much higher than we now see it to be. The increase in the diameter occurs on a line with the lintels of the two doorways ; and on the sort of shelf formed by the retirement of the wall there had most probably rested the roof-beams of the lower story of this centre tower, it may be, of the building, for tradition assures us that all these castles once had roofs.

From the circular bend in what remains of a stair in the wall (ten steps), it seems likely that there had formerly been an upper story to which it had led, for the bend does not point outwards. The enlargement in the higher portion of this structure is common to many others of the same kind.

The stair above mentioned is 2 feet 6 inches wide, and the length of the passage leading to it is 11 feet. The lintel of its door and that of the other are both formed by two great stones, the one laid above the other, so as to give a strength sufficient to upbear even such a mass of wall as we are supposing to have been and still in part see remaining here. This wall is 21 feet in thickness, and in the passage leading outward through it there occurs near the middle of the wall another pair of such

door posts and lintels, and at the outer side of it a third pair, forming as it were three places where gates might be fixed. This also is a common feature of the entrance to such inner chambers of castles of the kind. All of these stone door-posts of the Tappock are 7 feet 6 inches high. The inner half of the entrance through this wall is of an oval shape, the outer half is quite straight, and all of it (21 feet) is roofed with great stones, which reach from side to side, which space is about three feet. In its entire thickness this wall appears to be built of shaped stones, sandstones, and many of these are so white, clean, and free from all decay, as still to have the quarry marks upon them,—a fact which may be accounted for by the whole having been so thoroughly buried in the soil for long ages. Two feet by 18 inches is about the general size of the great mass of the stones. A specimen of the masonry is given in the drawing exhibited, and also in Vol. VI. of the Proceedings, Plate XVI.

Masons say that the stones are arranged with skill. Around the outer sides of all the walls are placed at regular distances of about 12 feet large upright stones, 4 feet high and 2 feet broad, used probably to bind and strengthen the masonry.

At the distance of 30 feet from the innermost wall there occurs another and semicircular wall, having the two ends of it resting on the brink of the precipice; part of it is still 10 feet high and 10 feet broad; and again, at the distance outward of other 30 feet, there is another semicircular wall, which is about 4 feet high and 7 feet broad.

The entrance to this stronghold seems to have cut by a straight line right through all the three walls, and that in a north-easterly direction, and there still remains 30 feet of it having good masonry on either side. In digging out the rubbish from the central portion of the building there were found some stone balls, two querns, and two stones having on them those circular markings which are now so much attracting the attention of antiquaries. (See the list of donations of articles found in excavating the Tappock, by Col. Joseph Dundas of Carronhall, in the Proceedings, Vol. VI. p. 111.)

Even the mighty hand of time could but very slowly have wrought scathe to walls so strong as those of the Tappock, but the hand of man has been from time to time busied in removing their materials, and, as might have been expected, the outer wall has been the first and greatest

sufferer, and in the surrounding walls of many a field and many a road we see a prodigality of goodly masonry, which tells us very distinctly that the stones of it were got very cheap. The kerbstones, also, of the foot-paths of one road along five miles of it appear to have been similarly obtained. From the castle down hill to the high road there is a broad road (10 feet broad) all paved with the same stones, and it was no doubt made to assist in the process of removing the stones. There is about half a mile of this paved way. It is not Roman, is too *broad* to have been a British way, and, doubtless, it is modern, though in our times we seldom pave our rural ways, but then here the stuff for doing so was already made.

Immediately on the south side of this hill fort there still remains about a mile of the real Roman road leading to the north of Scotland. Its walls and ditches are most distinctly there, but of the Roman we are not here writing.

The above description may to some appear unnecessarily minute, but it is so intended, because to understand this one structure rightly is rightly to understand the whole class to which it belongs. (See Notes on the Excavation of the Tappock, by Col. Joseph Dundas of Carronhall, in the Proceedings, Vol. II. p. 259, and Plates XV. and XVI.)

We now pass on westward about two miles, to where there is a rocky knoll perhaps not more than 100 feet in height. It is precipitous only on one side, and there a stream winds around it. On the north side of this knoll is to be found the small underground structure represented in Nos. 7 and 8 of the drawings exhibited.

This small round chamber is 12 feet deep, by 6 feet wide at the bottom, and 10 feet wide at the top. There is a covered way leading out from the bottom of this curious place, of which 30 feet still remain; 8 feet of it has a roof formed of large stones, which reach from wall to wall, and the space between these walls is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide. This "way" may have led to the water supply (the stream and a fine well) of what appears to have been a round castle larger than the "Tappock" itself; but as this hill is of very easy ascent, there now remains only a very dim outline of its walls, for the easy access has made the removal of its stones all the more complete. From the great number of shaped stones, and also from the circular arrangement of these, as is indicated in the accompanying drawings, it seems highly probable that the small round chamber formed a part of a large fort which had formerly covered the whole of the rocky mound.

Here, again, we observe in the farm walls around that abundance of shapen stones which affords us a hint of the ease with which they had been procured, and justifies the saying, "That a shapen stone never lies long on the road."

Travelling about four miles further west, until we get near to Stirling, at a mansion-house called Livilands, there has stood another of the round houses, which seems to have had three circular walls with probably 20 feet of space between each of them. The stones of these walls are all gone, but the mark where their foundations had been is sufficiently distinct. The area of the central chamber had apparently been about 50 feet in diameter. It is situated on a part of that terrace or ancient sea-beach which is found around almost the whole valley of the Forth, and on which elevation many of those round houses are built. Its height is about 40 feet.

In the centre of the valley, and crossing it at right angles, is a line of rocky eminences anciently called the *Govane* hills (now the Gowlin), and on the most southern part of these rocks is Stirling Castle, on whose site, we are told, there once stood only one round castle or tower; and, in the oldest notices we have of this place, it is called a *dune*—and first it is Snadune, then Snawdun, then Snowdown, and, by-and-by, when we hear of a town being added to it, it is called Strevelling and Sterling. The poet Lindsay calls it, "Snawdun, we thy touris hie." Sir Robert Sibbald and Mr Horsley speak of the remains of a Roman station, visible in their times. Early in the last century the *Prætorium* still remained, and was described as being fortified with three ramparts of earth with fosses, and these ramparts so high that "a man on horseback could not see over them." We are rather inclined to take these walls from the Romans and claim them for our forefathers; but, as Boeca says that Agricola fortified this place, we must leave it in doubt. On the most northern of these "Govane" hills certainly there are the foundations of a real British round castle, on a mound now called "Murdoch's Know." As for the walls of it, few note their presence under the thick grassy turf, for they have been cut through and thrown out of all shape in the construction of modern walks, but a practised eye can easily discern the lines of both its inner and outer walls, and at the distance of half a mile the outline of the whole hill reveals the contour of an ancient

castle—the levelled top, the terraced ground, &c. The area of this fort had been 50 feet in diameter, the inner wall appears to have been 20 feet thick, and the outer wall probably about 7 feet thick, with a distance between the two walls of about 25 feet. The walls have been of sandstone; the hill on which it stands is a basaltic rock. In more modern times this place had been used as a seat of justice (or, shall we say, injustice), and here it was that Murdoch, Duke of Albany, his two sons, and his son-in-law, were beheaded in one day; and Scott, in his "Lady of the Lake," apostrophises it as "Fatal mound, that oft hath heard the death-axe sound." This "mound" overhangs and commands the modern bridges of Stirling; but it ought always to be remembered (and by historians seldom is remembered), that in the days when men dealt death to their fellow-men by axes and arrows of stone, and built themselves round castles, they did not cross the Aven Dhu at that place—they must have crossed it before it was swollen by the addition of the Teith and Allan. Even the Romans appear to have done so at or near to Craig Forth at a place called *Kaimes*, where we doubt not, from the name, that there once was a *camp*, mayhap a Roman one, for there we have the most abundant traces of the line of march of those invaders who, in going north through the valley of *our vision*, have left the marks of their axes on the trees recently dug up at Blair Drummond; and probably they crossed the Teith near to that place, and then, following the level of the river Ardoch, arrived *in safety* at their camp at Ardoch, a thing which it would seem that, in a military point of view, they never could have achieved by following the steep, narrow course of the Allan. But, having forwarded these people through our lines of British defences, we again return to "our own people;" and, two miles west from Stirling, near to the old rural village of Gargunnoch, we find *the Kier* of Gargunnoch. In the first syllable of the name of this place we have, no doubt, "caer," and in the last knock, knoll, or hill—castle and hill. "The knock" on which the round fort or kier is built is a conically-shaped rock of the very reddest sandstone, a soft damp stone, but the ancient castle-builders were too wise to use any of it for their masonry, so they have brought all the stones for their walls down from a stratum of basaltic rock which stands about a mile up the steep mountain side to the south of it; and this circumstance of the basalt being used in the con-

struction of it, makes it very easy even now, when almost all their material is removed, to be able to tell with certainty that once on a time those walls had been great, for on either side of this kier there flows a mountain stream whose bed is filled with the large gray boulders of basalt of which they had been formed. The modern bridge in the village appears to be built of this material also. A drawing and ground-plan of this kier are given in Plate I. It seems to have had three circular walls, of which the central is somewhat oval, and besides these defences there had been, both on the north and south sides, a moat which had been filled with water from the two streams which pass close by it on the east and the west sides. This castle stands on ground slightly elevated, and "the knock" has very steep, rocky sides; but the next fort we have to mention is quite down on the plain, and owed all its strength to its water surroundings; it is called "the *Peel* of Gargunnoch." A small stream runs on the east side of this place and another on the west, and on the north is the river Forth, so that there was only needed a moat on the south side of it to make an island of the place, and no doubt such it had been, as its name indicates, for "peel" and pool are the same in signification; and here it may be added that "pol" and "pow" (sounded "poo") are all modifications of the same word, and that word abounds in all the valley of the Forth. Will it be found true that the border "peels" all had moats around them? Of the stone defences of the Gargunnoch "peel," there remains only a small portion of one wall, for it has fared peculiarly ill with this antiquity, as in recent times both a highway and a railway have been carried right through its site. In Blind Harry's "Wallace" we find that this place was garrisoned by English, and that Wallace surprised and took it and *them*, which event brings down its history to times too modern for these notes.

Five miles further west in the valley from Gargunnoch, at the village of Kippen, is "the Kier of Kippen." Its situation is not high, perhaps not a hundred feet above the plain and river Forth. On the east side of it is a deep glen with a pretty mountain stream running and leaping over falls as it passes through it, and its banks are very precipitous under "the Kier" wall. The centre of this castle is about 90 feet in diameter; part of only one wall remains, and it is about 12 feet broad; but there is some cause to believe that it may have once had the usual three walls, as

the bridge across the stream by its side, and also many roadside walls, appear to have been built out of its material.

The other four stone circles in this parish have had the fortune to be mentioned in writings of several antiquaries, but have little claim to such notice. The one, which is 30 feet in diameter, may have been a *strength*, but the others are mere—perhaps rather modern houses. A tumulus near to the railway line was lately opened, and in it was found “an auld can” and some coins.

At Kippen the valley is closed in by the mountain ranges meeting together, and its kier is the farthest west of the castles, on its south side. We shall now pass over to the north side, and there, right across the plain from Kippen is Benledi, and on its giant roots is the first of what might be termed the third line of defences to the north of the Roman wall.

Bochastell is in the parish of Callander, and is situated about 2 miles west from the village of that name; and there, on a spur of Benledi called “The Dun of Bochastell,” is the stronghold. (See Plate II.) The top of this “Dun” is probably 600 feet above the Loch Vennachar, which lies close at its foot. The summit of this hill is artificially flattened, and forms a perfect circle in diameter 85 feet. The one half of its circumference has a perpendicular precipice for its very sure defence, and the other, which is also almost a precipice, is made strong by five walls, all of which, with the exception of the outer one, are more than 10 feet broad, and that outer, or fifth wall, is 4 feet in thickness. The distance between the top of the first wall and the top of the second wall is 30 feet; between the second and third walls is 25 feet; and between the third and fourth walls is 15 feet; the average height of each being about 20 feet. (See section, in Plate II.)

The fifth wall is very irregular in its course, and is now quite low, merely visible, but very distinctly so. On the north side of the castle it takes a circular sweep around a lower hill, which, in a military point of view, is dangerously near to the Bochastell. The diameter of this circular outwork is 115 feet. Close to the place where all the walls approach the perpendicular cliff there is a gap or cut right through all of them, except this fifth one; and in this gap, no doubt, had been the entrance to the building.

All the walls are built of sandstone as is the rock on which they rest; but they are now so covered with thick green turf that it is usual to hear



them spoken of as earthworks ; but a moment's reflection would teach any one the impossibility of such being the case, for there is no soil on this lofty steep out of which to construct them.

In the inner circle is a fine spring of water—a rather singular place for one. At times it wells up so as to make a pretty round pool on the top of this cliff.

The view from this “Dun” is very noble. Far below are the Teith and Loch Vennachar, on the south ; to the north, are Benledi and the fine mountain “Pass of Leny,” leading on to Strath Ire ; and westward, we see all down the vale of Teith to Stirling, Linlithgow, and Edinburgh. A fitting place surely this for a “Bale Fire.”

The name Bocastle is now attached to the humble homestead on the meadow below, and the once famous fortress is well-nigh forgotten, and so little indeed is it known that even the careful Burton, in his “History of Scotland,” has called it a Roman fort. To see it is to know that it is OUR OWN.

Sometimes we hear regret expressed that on these buildings we find no inscription to tell the story of their builders ; but are not the buildings themselves an inscription recording that they were no wandering hordes, but a sturdy people, saying, This land is ours, and we will hold it.

About 4 miles eastward from this castle had once stood a much larger one. Its site is on the farm of Auchinlaich, on an eminence a few hundred yards south from the Bridge of Bracklinn, and on the west bank of the Kelty river. There remains little to indicate its presence save the levelling of the top of the hill, and a slight indication of what was once an earthen rampart and ditch,—a fact which is mentioned in the Old Statistical Account of the parish of Callander. The area of the fort must have much exceeded 100 feet. In a south-easterly direction from Auchinlaich, and at the distance of about 7 miles, and about 4 miles south from Doune, there is on the estate of Coldoch a round house, or rather the remains of one. Three or four years ago I mentioned to the late Sir J. Y. Simpson my assurance that such a building was there, and gave him drawings of the external indications of it, and of the one wall-chamber which was then visible, and was then called a Roman well : The nature of its masonry at once showed me that it was British work-

manship, and its surroundings showed it to be a house. Very lately your Society has had excavations made, and the accompanying drawing gives its measurements in an exact manner.<sup>1</sup>

It is built of stone, and its masonry is rude, all the lines of it being very irregular, and the stones small. The entrance to the house is the feature of greatest interest, as it serves to explain the form which is found in the entrances of other castles, such as the Tappock, where there is this sort of entrance, but not the great stone door, to explain the curious bulge in the form of the entrance gallery,—a bulge, no doubt, serving to make room for the great stone when it was rolled aside; and we may observe how judicious were those ancient architects in placing the door in the centre of this 19 feet wall—a wall which, being built without cement, could at no other place have sustained any force applied to its door.

Again the ascending stair is the same in form as that of the Tappock, and, no doubt, led to an upper story, and probably to a gallery and chambers, such as in Castle Troddan in Glenelg and other so-called Pictish brochs. The measurements are these:—Thickness of wall 19 feet; the entrance running through it is generally about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide, but immediately within the door-posts it bulges out to a width of 3 feet 9 inches, and in this place stands the ponderous stone door; the stone door-posts are 10 feet in from the centre chamber. The passage leading to the stair is 7 feet long by 3 feet 4 inches in breadth; after the bend in it the passage and stair are 13 feet; steps of stair remaining, 7.

The north chamber is 8 feet 3 inches by 4 feet 8 inches, and in height to roof 7 feet.

None of the other chambers have the roof remaining to them.

The south chamber is 8 feet 6 inches by 4 feet 6 inches.

The west chamber is 5 feet by 5 feet.

To all these the entrances are about 2 feet wide and 4 feet high.

The site of this house is on that formerly mentioned terrace-level which surrounds so very large a portion of this valley, and is so well fitted for such strongholds.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A notice of this broch, with plans, will appear in the Society's Transactions, the *Archæologia Scotica*, vol. v.

<sup>2</sup> I find there lately were other six *Duns* in the immediate neighbourhood. The names of these were Auchinsalt, Borland, or Torland, Balmackader, Jarr or Tor, and Kier.

About half a mile west from this is an artificial mound of perhaps 50 feet diameter, but it has not been opened.

Returning again to the line of the river Teith. Near to the Bridge-of-Teith is a small tumulus, and in this neighbourhood are two round rings, the probable remains of ancient houses, but possibly not very old, as in St Kilda the inhabitants still use this form, evidently the one best suited to buildings made without cement.

Doune (Dun), no doubt, had once, where its castle now stands, a more ancient fortress; but the name is all that now remains to bespeak it. About half a mile east from Doune is a round site preserved by fine pine trees, and north from that place, on the farm of Glenhead, is a cluster of four "standing" stones, one of these having on it some "cup markings."

On the same farm, on levelling a mound with the view of ploughing the field more easily, there were discovered several stone cists, and in one of these was found an urn of burnt clay, a full sized drawing of which is given, and also a stone hammer of a peculiarly hard stratified gneiss, nearly black in colour, highly polished on the surface. Stone of the sort abounds in the neighbourhood. On the same farm is a monolith of great size; also an earth-work an exact square of 100 feet diameter: lately it stood 4 feet high like a great table, but the frequent run of the plough over it has now almost effaced it. No doubt it was a Roman work, and is on the line of way we have pointed out as the one they probably took to march from the valley of Forth to Ardoch camp.

Three miles farther east, on the heights to the north of Bridge of Allan, there is an artificial mound about 50 feet in diameter. It has been opened and pronounced to be a tomb; but the view from the place is so wide and useful, in a military sense, that one might rather suppose it was a lookout of the living.

Still farther east 2 miles, we meet with the Abbey Craig and its "Wallace Camp." The central area has been of oval form,—a precipice protecting about one-half of its outline (the western half); the other is on ground sloping very steeply to the east, and on that side it has had a double wall. Part of the inner wall is still about 10 feet high, and probably twice as broad. It has been constructed partly of earth and partly of stone. The second wall is of stone, and there is a good deal of *vitrified*

stone around this fort. Unfortunately this ancient castle is almost buried among the debris of the modern Wallace monument.

To the north and east of the Abbey Craig is the Ochil range of hills; and on one, that range called Castle Law, a part of Dunmyot, there are the remains of a large round castle. (See Plate III.)

The centre area of it is an oval 85 by 55 feet in extent. The wall around this part is quite complete as a line of stones, but is now as low as the turf in many places, and is nowhere more than 2 feet high, and only 4 feet broad. Outside of this wall are three others, having about 30 feet of distance between each of them.

The stones of these walls, now remaining, lie on the slope of the hill in fan-shaped heaps, on the site of the several walls; but, owing to the extreme steepness of the ground, they are also scattered over the intervening spaces. Still the original lines of each of the walls are easily traceable.

The precipitous form of this hill makes the dispersion of the material of this castle a consequence of the laws of nature; but, besides this, there is here another cause of dilapidation, for nothing is more common than to see the idler rolling its stones over the cliff, and then with eager delight watching their progress as they bound down the sides of the mighty precipice which surrounds this "castle in the air." The height on which it stands must exceed 1000 feet.

The Castle Law is of basaltic formation, and the round castle is built of the same stone, and as seems usual in this neighbourhood when walls are constructed of that material they have no great mass, probably because this stone is so hard and difficult to quarry.

As an indication that this popularly called "cairn" was once a human habitation, it is remarkable that its stone heaps are covered with nettles, while on all the hill around this plant is nowhere to be seen.

On the western side of this hill is Blair Logie Glen, and from the upper end of it there run two parallel walls, forming a very narrow way, which way leads in the very best line of ascent to the castle, and can lead apparently to no other place. Fully half a mile of these twin walls is most distinctly traceable. It is doubtful that it has been a *covered* way, as it is *now* at least, rather wider than such ways generally are found to be; but it still is deep enough between its walls to show how easily it could be made a hidden way. That such might be highly desirable will

be at once recognised when it is stated, that about half a mile distant, down on the plain, at the banks of the Forth, it is believed that there stood a Roman fort, where their fleet was moored—at the Pow, Poo, or Pool.

*Tillicoultry Castle.*—On the front of the same Ochil range, and about six miles further east, in the parish of Tillicoultry, and on the side of the glen of that name, there are the vestiges of another round castle. It has had three concentric circular walls, with about 25 feet between each of them. The central circle was probably 80 feet in diameter. The desolation of this place is almost complete, all the usable stones of the structure having been removed to build sheepfolds; and the square walls of these folds may be seen traced within the bounds of the original circular ones of the ancient castle.

Only the poorest debris of the material of these walls now remains; and yet so recent is the destruction which has come upon them, that aged people in the village tell that they remember, when in their childhood, much of the building had a roof upon it—a roof of stone,—but they could not describe the manner or extent of it; but that “it was fine fun to play in ‘Johnnie Mool’s hill,’” the name which the aged people gave to the place.

The rock on which the fortress occurs seems to be about 400 feet high, and is so singularly steep, that, in many parts of the ascent to it, the way has to be formed by long wooden stairs.

The view from the top of the castle hill has in it almost every feature that goes to constitute fine scenery. The wild, deep, rugged glen—the lofty mountain (2700 feet high)—the far-stretching valley—the glittering winding river—the distant sea,—all make up a scene of rarest beauty. But it is true of each of the sites of the castles mentioned in these notes, that the view to be obtained from it would (though there were no antiquities on them) be sufficient reward to every visitor.

As this is the last fort on our so-called third line of strengths, it may here not be out of place to offer a few remarks on circumstances that seem common to the class.

The first thing which their architects appear to have attended to in setting about to build was, thoroughly to level all the space intended for the area of the central part of the building, be it house or castle. These

round forts are most frequently situated on the top of conically-shaped hills; and these hills are often spoken of as "truncated," for many a fanciful purpose, such as sun-worship and the like, when simply those sensible Britons only wished to have plain floors for their dwellings as we do. Again, when they had outer walls to build, they scooped out the slope of the hill until they had got a sound horizontal space on which to found them. And so certainly is this the case, that on many a hill-top, long after every stone of a once goodly structure has been removed, one will find printed on the soil the outlines of the foundations; and these are the most distinctly visible when one looks at them as a SKY-LINE.

It will also be found to characterise most of them, that the innermost of their concentric walls was the broadest, and that each successive wall was less broad, as they were more distant from the centre. An instance of this may be seen in the Tappock at Larbert. So far as our present range of observation teaches, it also seems true of them, that those which are built of sandstone have the most massy walls, the whinstone walls being very much less so. Perhaps this was because of the superior durability of the latter stone, making less bulk necessary—but more probably because of the greater difficulty of quarrying it. The only way known to us by which they could split up that stone, was by kindling fire along the line of intended fracture, then pouring water upon it, and striking heavy blows on the part. This method would serve for large masses, but could not be well used for small.

Generally speaking, all forts have in them, or very near to them, a good water supply; and in cases in which that supply is from a stream at the bottom of the mound on which they stand, you find traces, more or less distinct, of a covered way to that stream.

There is much reason to conclude that the entrances to their buildings were commonly by covered ways. At present we do not offer proof of this conjecture, but may at another time.

There now remains only that the roof be spoken of, for roof there no doubt once was to all of them. Surely those men who were wont with such care to cover the heads of the dead, would know how to shelter the heads of the living? In the vaulted chambers we see one style of roof, and in the Glenelg and Orkney "Pictish Brochs" we see a modification of

the same, and we venture to add to these the much written of "Arthur's oven;" but of this in another paragraph.

And now mention may be made of the ancient geographic state of the district in which these antiquities occur.

It cannot be doubted that 2000 or even 1000 years ago the Carse of Stirling or Forth valley was an uninhabitable swamp, for nowhere upon it do we find remains either of castles or of villages, and indeed up to this day there are no villages on the plain; and until very recent times fever and ague so abounded there, as to furnish very sufficient reason why none but the farmers of the soil should be willing to live upon it. They and "will o' wisp" had it all to themselves, and all the villages were placed a good way up on the roots of the surrounding ranges of hills on either side of it, and the roads hobbled along over the rough ground at their bases; and, in truth, over the whole plain, it is everywhere easier to find the remains of colonies of *oysters* than of men.

*Arthur's O'on.*—Returning to the same point from which we started, that is, to the banks of the Carron, we shall offer a few words on an antiquarian pet, now, unfortunately, only to be found in books, we mean "Arthur's O'on."

If any one will attentively compare the masonry of it with that of *all* other known British buildings, the *aiming* at an arch by the method of pushing forward one stone beyond another until opposing walls meet—the leaving an opening in what stands for a roof—in these and in other points this erection will be found to be somewhat similar to the Pictish towers in Glenelg. And as for the *Roman* arch of the doorway, it has no doubt been added by that people; for besides its being a true arch, and therefore not British, it is also an arch the most difficult of construction—one made in a circular and semi-arched wall; and, moreover, there is very good proof that said invaders had used this building, as there once was a Roman inscription over the inner lintel of the doorway; and besides, if this people intended to use this building, they were not likely to choose to creep in and out of it by the sort of lowly-covered way, which evidently was the only kind of entrance which the British builders of those times gave to any of their houses.

Gordon, in his "Iter," mentions the inscription over the door of the O'on; and in the copy of that book now before us, there is a manuscript

note in these words :—“ In a manuscript collection at Panmure, there are at the end of *Extracta Chronicæ Scotiæ*, notes by Henry Sinclair, dean of Glasgow about 1560, when he affirms the inscription was visible above the door of Arthur’s Huif,” as he calls it.

“ Boece wrote in 1525, and had probably given a faithful report of this inscription, Sup. 27.”

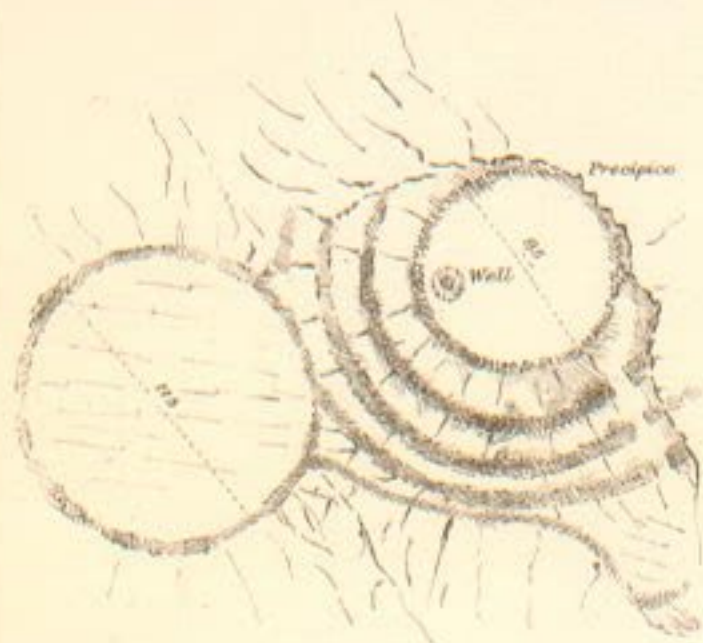
To the above note we now add an extract from Gordon :—“ It, the O’on, goes frequently under the appellation of *Julius Hoff*, or house ; and if ever the initial letters J. A. M. P. M., mentioned by Sir Robert Sibbald, were engraven on stone in the building, it may not be reckon’d altogether absurd that they should bear this reading—*Julius Agricola Magnæ Pietatis monumentum Posuit Templum.*”

The opinion of such a tyro as the writer is of small value ; but by adding some *facts* to the knowledge of more knowing ones, she may help to a just judgment on a subject on which *fancy* has had full sway. Here is a little morsel of the *real* near to this oven—there is a place called Dunoven—“ Dun,” a fortified hill, and “ Aven,” a stream, so might not the “ O’on ” be rendered for Arthur’s oven—“ Ar ” belonging to ; “ Thor,” God ; “ Oven,” stream ; a river of God ? In the Norse language we learn that “ Thor ” is still the Bible name of God, the translators using that word ; and in this neighbourhood we have many “ Thors,”<sup>1</sup>—at Larbert Tor wood, or the great Caledonian forest—Tor brex, Tor mill. Some say that the word signifies *High*, but the two last of these “ Tors ” are low-lying places ; but grant it to be high, then still we know what is meant by the MOST HIGH.

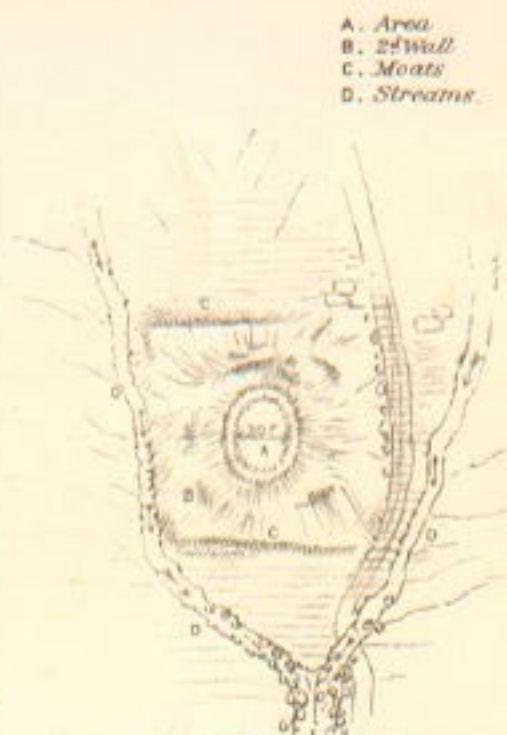
Tacitus says that Julius Agricola *helped* THE BRITONS to build houses and places of public resort ; in which case here, if anywhere, we might look for buildings of a mixt architecture, such as is above hinted at for this “ O’on.” And in the long period during which the Romans remained in this part of the country, it were unreasonable to suppose that our forefathers did not learn many of the arts of life from the invader, and particularly those of building and road-making.

<sup>1</sup> *Tor*, in Gaelic, means a stone or rock.

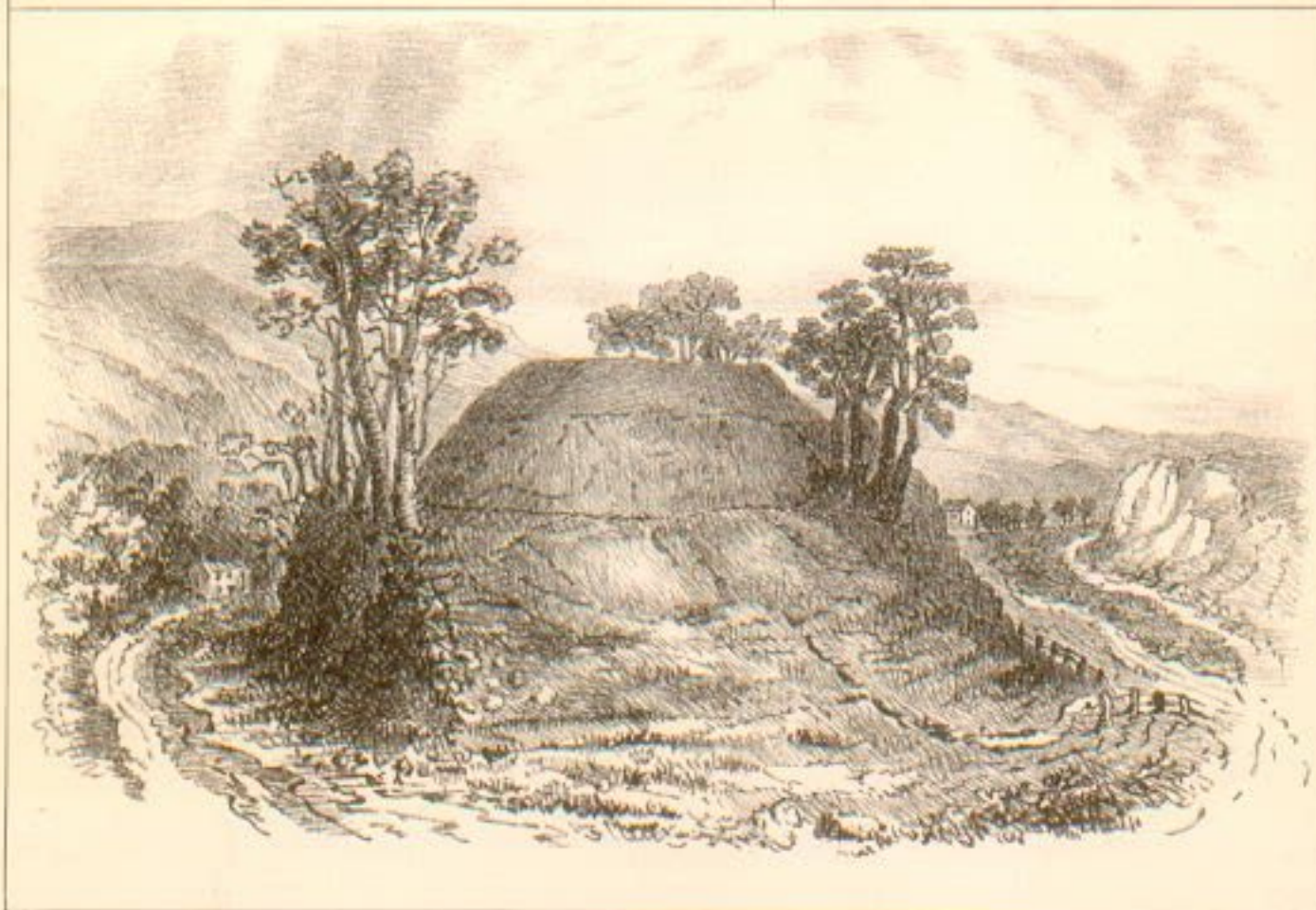




GROUND PLAN OF CASTLE ON BENLEDIE.

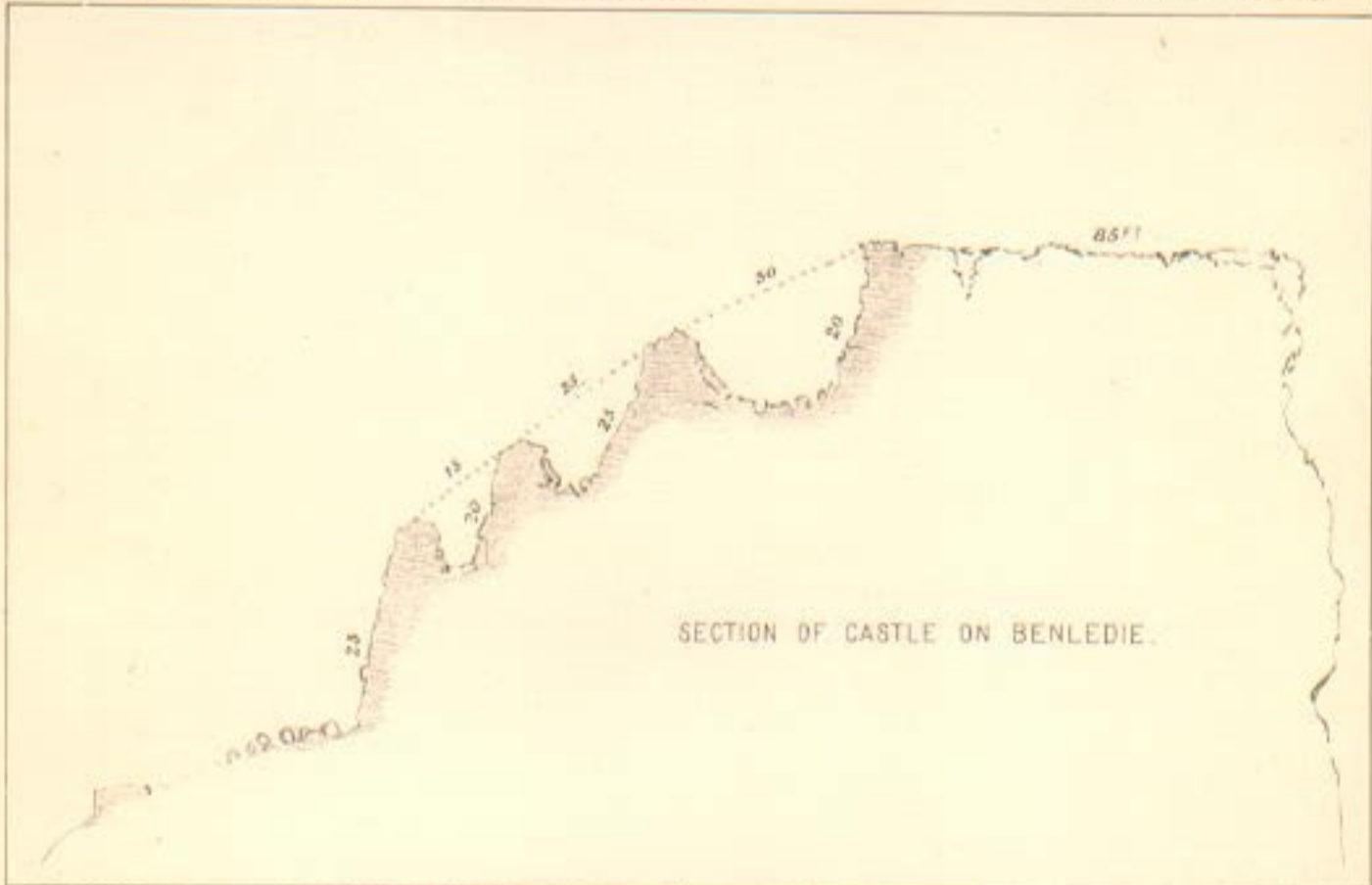


THE KIER OF GARGUNNOCK.



C. MACLADAN.

THE KIER OF GARGUNNOCK.



W. & A. Johnston, Edinburgh

C. MACLAGAN.

WALLS OF CASTLE ON BENLEDIE.

