

VI.

NOTES ON THE “ROMAN” ROADS OF THE ONE-INCH ORDNANCE  
MAP OF SCOTLAND. BY JAMES MACDONALD, LL.D., F.S.A.Scot.

1. PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

[The publication of this paper is postponed.]

2. THE AYRSHIRE ROAD.

For nearly seventy years an old road, that had once run southwards from Ayr to Dalmellington and Loch Doon and thence into Galloway, has been generally regarded as Roman. On the Ordnance Survey map of Ayrshire some parts of it that still remain are marked as such.

The first writer who applies that epithet to the road is George Chalmers. In the third volume of *Caledonia*, published in 1824, there is a notice of it supplied to him by Joseph Train, “who traversed it,”<sup>1</sup> as we are told, “accompanied by Mr Hetrick of Dalmellington.”<sup>1</sup> Train, who was a native of Sorn, in Ayrshire, is best known for having furnished Sir Walter Scott with the groundwork of several of the Waverley Novels. He was a born collector of legends. Holding an appointment in the Excise, which led to his being moved from time to time to various parts of the country, he enjoyed unusual opportunities of accumulating stores of that kind of lore. By Scott, Train’s name was mentioned to Chalmers in 1815, as one likely to assist him in working out the history of Ayrshire and Galloway for the third volume of his great work then in progress. This led to Train’s bringing under Chalmers’ notice several ancient camps in Galloway, as well as the Ayrshire road. Which of them first assigned its construction to the Romans cannot perhaps be now determined, though the probability is that it was Train. But its identification as Roman, if not suggested by Chalmers, at once received his sanction. In a letter dated 20th June 1818, he warmly congratulates his correspondent on the supposed

<sup>1</sup> *Caledonia*, vol. iii. p. 449. For a brief notice of Robert Hetrick, “the Dalmellington Poet,” see (Paterson’s) *Contemporaries of Burns*, pp. 339–341.

discoveries the latter had made. "You will enjoy the glory of being the first who has traced the Roman footsteps so far westward into Wigtownshire, and the Roman road from Dumfriesshire to Ayr town. You have gone far beyond any correspondent of mine in these parts."<sup>1</sup>

Using, no doubt, Train's words, Chalmers thus describes the course of the Ayrshire portion of the road :—"Departing from Dalmellington, for two miles it forms what is called the bridle road to Littlemill. It then strikes off from the Littlemill way, in the farm of Burnhead, and passes through Chapmeknows, Pennasson, Smithston, and Cube. In the four first-mentioned farms it is only seen in detached pieces, but in the Cube it is quite entire for a long distance. It then goes through the farm of Borland, and on the north side of the Borland Burn it is seen in several detached places, from whence it passes over the Mains-hill, and about a mile further on it pushes right through the farm of the Causeway, which is supposed to have taken its name from the circumstance of this road running through it. From the Causeway it is seen quite plain all the distance to Percluan Mill, in one continued line, which is obviously more than a mile. The Roman road now passes through the farms of Brae, Lindsayston, Cockhill, and Whitestanes, but is only seen in small detached pieces in those farms where the ground has not been tilled. There is an old man, however, who is called Tinnock, who lives near Cockhill, and who said that, about fifty years ago, a great deal of this road was raised to make room for the plough; and he pointed out where the road was raised, and the purposes to which the stones were applied. Within half a mile of the town of Ayr, on this route, there is a place called the Foul Causeway, which, being in a straight line from Cockhill to Ayr, must have been a part of the Roman road; but no one could remember of any causeway being there. Some old people in this neighbourhood call this road the Picts' Road, and others the Roman Way; but the construction of the pavement in the Roman manner, of this remain, evinces clearly that it was a Roman road."<sup>2</sup>

Having satisfied himself on such grounds that the road is Roman,

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporaries of Burns*, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> *Caledonia*, vol. iii. pp. 448-9.

Chalmers gives a loose rein to his imagination. "The Romans," he goes on to say, "having such a road must necessarily have had encampments through which it passed; yet no Roman camp has yet been found in Ayrshire. Their trinkets have been found in various parts of this extensive shire. They had erected their villas along the fine shore of the Clyde Firth, from Kelleyburn<sup>1</sup> to Irvine, and on this coast the remains of their baths have been discovered, where so many bathing establishments have recently been formed."<sup>2</sup>

So far as I have been able to ascertain, no previous writer even hints at the probable existence of a Roman road in this part of Ayrshire.<sup>3</sup> The compliment Chalmers pays to Train in the letter already quoted, implies this much. The remark as to tradition, made evidently on Train's authority, must be received with some reserve. Had the road been regarded as Roman for successive generations by the people of the district, the circumstance, owing to its bearing so closely on the extent of the Roman conquests in the south-west of Scotland, could hardly have been passed over in silence by Gordon, Maitland and Roy, who sought so diligently all over Scotland for remains of Roman roads, as well as by the authors of the Old Statistical Accounts of the different

<sup>1</sup> A small stream that forms during its short course a part of the boundary-line between the counties of Ayr and Renfrew.

<sup>2</sup> *Caledonia*, vol. iii. p. 449.

<sup>3</sup> This remark, instead of being qualified, is greatly strengthened by what the writer of the Old Statistical Account of Straiton has to say in favour of his conjecture that the name of the village was originally Stretton, being "erected on or near some Roman highway." Had he ever heard of a Roman road in an adjoining parish, he would likely have managed somehow to make a branch of it pass through Straiton. Evidently he had not, since he is obliged to be contented with referring to "an urn, curiously carved and filled with ashes, found some years ago" in digging a foundation for an obelisk on Benan Hill (*Old Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. iii. p. 586). The urn was unquestionably British, as were "those containing human bones" found at Low Monkton Hill, parish of Monkton, of which the writer of the Old Account says:—"There is no tradition how they were deposited, if it was not in the time of the Romans, when Julius Agricola commanded, who was said to have sent Roman forces into that part of the country, with the view of invading the land" (*Old Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. xii. p. 402). In strange contrast to the frequency with which British urns have been mistaken by our older writers for Roman, is the fact that no properly authenticated case of a Roman burial has as yet been discovered in Scotland.

Ayrshire parishes through which it passed. Once, however, it was pronounced to be Roman with a show of authority, such a belief would soon take a hold of the popular mind. It may even be that Train adopted the unrecorded conjecture of some earlier observer, which he found floating in the district and which lent colour to his assertion. In any case, the reception accorded to his statements on the publication of the third volume of *Caledonia*, and the credence still given them, is not at all surprising. At the time Chalmers wrote, his opinion in matters antiquarian had come to be regarded as carrying great weight; and for many years few thought of calling almost any of them in question. The first volume, published in 1807, gave currency to what are now known to be exaggerated notions regarding the progress of the Roman arms in other parts of Scotland. Similar statements as to the presence of the Romans in Ayrshire, were thus at once accepted on the very slender evidence that Chalmers had to offer in their support. In the New Statistical Accounts of the parishes of Ayr, Dalrymple, and Dal-mellington, *Caledonia* is appealed to for the true history of this road; and in Paterson's *History of Ayrshire*, there is claimed for the county, on the strength of its "Roman" road, a Roman period in its history. Authors of local histories and compilers of Guide Books, drawing their information from these sources, have aided in spreading and confirming a belief in the theory. In this way a tradition that the road is Roman has undoubtedly been now for some time prevalent in the district; but it is of too recent an origin to be received as evidence on the question.

From Chalmers' remarks one would infer that the Ayrshire road had long been disused as a public thoroughfare. His words cannot well be read otherwise. Accordingly, the initial step in our inquiry must be to ascertain if his assumption is correct. It is not to be supposed that this suggests any suspicion that there was, on the part either of Chalmers or of Train, an intention to mislead others. Chalmers may have drawn an inference from Train's words they were not intended to convey, or the latter may have reached the conclusions he did with undue haste. Neither of them had sufficient acquaintance with the district to be independent of information, necessary to render their investigations complete, which they could have obtained only from those resident within it;

and this they may not have sought. We have no evidence that Chalmers was aware that the present Ayr and Dalmellington road was not made till the close of last century, and that another, which failed to meet the requirements of modern road surveyors and travellers, was then superseded. Yet such is the fact. Now, if the older of these roads was distinct from the “Roman road” of Chalmers, we ought to find traces of two roads that had run from Ayr to Dalmellington. On the other hand, if they were the same, there is here a road that, admitted to be Roman, must have been constructed at first in a manner so substantial as to stand the tear and wear of fifteen or sixteen centuries, and, at the end of that period, “evince clearly” by its pavement, its age and origin. Two questions are thus before us: Is the road supposed by Chalmers to be Roman, the Ayr and Dalmellington road of last century, or is it different from it? Does the “pavement” of the road described by him, portions of which we can still examine for ourselves, afford any evidence that it has been laid down “after the Roman manner.” The second of these questions is the more important, for it is on the character of the pavement that Chalmers makes his theory almost entirely depend.

With one exception, the last century maps of Ayrshire are on too small a scale to enable us to determine from them how far the present Ayr and Dalmellington road agrees in its course with the road it replaced. That exception is the map of the Armstrongs, published in 1775.<sup>1</sup> On comparing it with any large map of recent date, on which the roads are indicated, we discover that, for more than one half of the distance between Ayr and Dalmellington, the new road deviates but slightly from the old. The former winds somewhat here and there in order to avoid, where possible, the steeper ascents, otherwise they follow nearly the same track. Soon after passing Smithston, however, the new road keeps to the valley of the Doon, which, in common with the old, it approaches first at Hollybush; while the latter goes over the hills almost in a straight line to Dalmellington. If we next compare the old road, as shown by the Armstrongs, with the “Roman” road of Chalmers, we can hardly avoid coming to the conclusion that they are

<sup>1</sup> *A New Map of Ayrshire, comprehending Kyle, Cunningham, and Carrick. The scale one inch to a mile. By Captain Armstrong & Son, and engraved by J. Pyle, 1775.*

one and the same. Any doubt that may remain will be entirely removed by an inspection of the old Military Survey Map of Scotland (*circa*, 1756), preserved in the King's Library, British Museum. On it the line of the old road, in view of the object the map was intended to serve, is very distinctly laid down, and coincides closely with that of the "Roman" road.

On the accompanying map are shown on a reduced scale:—(1) The present road from Ayr to Dalmellington as well as, by continuous red lines, the existing portions of Chalmers' "Roman" road, as both are marked on the one-inch Ordnance map, the missing parts of the road being filled in by dotted red lines, according to the account of its course given in *Caledonia*; and (2), the "Air and Damallinton road" of the old Military Survey map.<sup>1</sup> That the latter is the same as the "Roman" road is evident at a glance. Keeping in view the superiority of the more recent map, we may be prepared for some trifling differences; but the number of places in or near the line of both roads that bear the very same names, puts the identity of the two beyond dispute. It will probably seem strange to many that, in 1824, remanent portions of a road that had been used twenty-two years or so before, should be spoken of in *Caledonia* as a newly-discovered relic of Roman times; and the fact that it is, throws a strong light on the imperfect manner in which archaeological investigations were too often carried on and recorded in those days.

Expression is also given to a belief that the two roads are the same, by the writer of the *New Statistical Account of Ayr*. When noticing "the great (Ayr and Galloway) Roman road," that "curious remnant of antiquity," as he styles it, he remarks:—"In many parts of its course distinct traces of it could be recognized till within a few years back, and, there is reason to believe, that within little more than half a century ago, it formed the only road that was used for communication betwixt Ayr and Galloway, and Dumfriesshire."<sup>2</sup>

It may, of course, be said with perfect truth that the road could have been the public one between Ayr and Galloway till the close of last

<sup>1</sup> I owe to Mr L. Anderson, Ayr Academy, a careful tracing of this portion of the Survey map, made for me from the original in the King's Library.

<sup>2</sup> *New Statistical Account of Ayrshire*, p. 39.

century, and yet at first the work of the Romans. In England, where portions of the great Roman highways by which it is generally believed to have been traversed, are yet to be found, and, according to some, in the South of Scotland also, Roman roads were used as thoroughfares during the Middle Ages and down to recent times. But the fact that the Romans kept a firm grasp on the greater part of England for nearly four centuries, is *à priori* evidence that it must have been traversed by roads, used and probably in part made by them. No such evidence can be offered in this case. We have no reason for believing that Ayrshire was ever occupied by the Romans. It is even doubtful if they entered it at all. That Roman armies or Roman traders passed from Galloway to the Ayrshire coast, or even that Ayr existed as a town in Roman times, are both mere assumptions.

We may now pass on to the second question.

At different times I have walked along the line of the “Roman” road from Castlehill, near Ayr, to Dalmellington. For miles all traces of it are gone, save that in some places the stones that had formed its sides and its foundation may be seen separating fields between which it had once run. Here and there, however, parts of it remain as noted on the Ordnance map. On the farm of Smithston a considerable piece of it is untouched, and overgrown with a thick green sward. Here, by permission of Mr Kilpatrick, readily granted, I examined its construction. A shallow trench, 10 feet 7 inches or so in breadth, had been dug, and two lines of kerbstones of various sizes, but regularly placed, laid along its sides. On the bottom was spread a foundation or bedding of stones, called in the West of Scotland a “bottoming.” This was covered first with smaller stones and then with gravel, to the depth of 4 or 5 inches. The whole formed the road. None of the kerbstones bore any marks of dressing. They, as well as the stones in the foundation of the road, had been all gathered from the adjoining fields. Fig. 1 is a section of the road as it appeared when the turf was stript off and an area of several feet of the roadway removed. In the original photograph, the kerbstones on the right have been exaggerated in size; and, as it was taken before those on the left were reached, the latter are not seen. An intelligent old man, whom I questioned,

informed me that, many years ago, he was often employed to break up for cultivation portions of the road on various farms in the parish of Dalrymple, and that its appearance was everywhere the same. In the New Statistical Account of Dalmellington, its structure is thus correctly described:—"In Chalmers' *Caledonia* notice is taken of a Roman road which passed through the length of the parish from north-east to south-west. The line of it has been traced through



Fig. 1. Section of Road. From a Photograph.

Dumfriesshire and Kirkeudbrightshire. The last remains of it, in this parish,<sup>1</sup> on the farm of Bankhead, were raised seven years ago to repair some dykes, which had formerly been built of the whinstone of which the road was formed. It had been from 10 to 11 feet broad, composed of a

<sup>1</sup> On the farm of Minnivey, within a short distance of the Mause of Dalmellington, the road is still in use for farm purposes.



row of large stones on either side, and filled up with smaller between."<sup>1</sup> No mention is here made of "pavement"; nor is anything of the kind, if we use the word in its proper sense, to be seen anywhere along the old road. Nothing can be more calculated to mislead than the way in which "pavement" and "paved road" have been employed by most of the older writers. Wherever a few stones, of any size and shape, were seen lying here and there embedded in the surface of a road, it was at once declared to be paved, and, consequently, to be Roman. In the present case, on parts of it still used, as on the farm of Minnivey, many of the kerbstones are visible; and it is not unlikely that Train and his companion took them to be the remains of a pavement that, as they supposed, had once covered the whole breadth of the road.

Owing to its foundation of stones, the Ayrshire road may indeed be said to have been paved, but in a manner the very reverse of that practised by the Romans. With them the pavement was on the surface, and consisted of blocks of stone closely fitted together; here we find a roughly-laid causeway at the bottom, with gravel spread on the surface. The rest of a Roman highway was made up of various closely compacted layers of broken stones, lime, and other materials laid down on a systematic plan. But it is only in Italy and the older provinces that perfect and typical examples of Roman roads are to be looked for. In countries such as North Britain, which the Romans only overran from time to time, they would use the trackways of the natives, repaired perhaps and improved by themselves as they passed along. In doing this, they must have taken as materials whatever came most readily to their hands. As such roads continued to be used and repaired long after the Romans left the island, they can scarcely be expected to afford clear evidence of the presence of that people in the locality, even when they may have been actually there.

From the "Explanation" the Armstrongs give of the Feature Characters used in their map, we see that the Dalmellington road was a "country" or parish road, maintained by statute labour. Shortly after entering Galloway it appears, from the narrow line that denotes its course on the Survey map, to have become for a considerable distance a

<sup>1</sup> *New Statistical Account of Ayrshire*, p. 315.

mere bridle-path. Roads marked as "Turnpike" are shown by the Armstrongs as connecting some of the more important centres of population. But as only eight years had elapsed between the passing of the first Ayrshire Road Act (1767), which was partial in its operation, and the publication of their Map (1775), the great majority of the roads in the country were still of the parish type.

There is undoubted evidence that, at least, one portion of the Ayr and Dalmellington road was made, or rather re-made, last century. In the records of the Ayr District Road Trustees, we find a Minute, of date 5th September 1792, which contains the substance of a petition presented to them by "James Ferguson of Bank, Esquire, Advocate." This petition sets forth that, in the year 1773, Mr Ferguson's father had re-made the part of the road passing through his lands, at an expense of more than £50. Of this sum he now claimed re-payment, stating that his father, besides disbursing it to the contractor, had afforded the latter facilities for executing the work, and, in particular, had allowed him to take down a stone dyke that stood alongside the road, and use the materials "for bottoming."<sup>1</sup>

Another portion of the same road, which is still left us, as Train saw it, furnishes by its appearance equally conclusive proof that it was not built by the Romans. Some miles below Smithston, the Boreland Burn, a small stream spoken of by Chalmers, is crossed by a bridge or culvert (Fig. 2) where the "Roman" road passes over it. The height of the sides of this culvert is only 5 feet 7 inches. Laid across them are several large stones, about 3 feet 6 inches in length, that form the foundation of the road. The design and workmanship of the whole are primitive enough, and stamp it as native.<sup>2</sup>

From the Minute Book already quoted, we learn the time at which the Trustees resolved to connect Ayr and Dalmellington by a new

<sup>1</sup> Through the courtesy of Mr William Pollock, solicitor, Ayr, I have been enabled to examine *No. I. District Road Trustee Records* of Ayrshire. The book gives much information regarding the condition of the roads round Ayr in the second half of last century.

<sup>2</sup> Drawings and photographs of the bridge and the Smithston section of the road, from which figs. 1, 2 have been taken, were obligingly made for me by Mr James M'Ewan, Oakfield Terrace, Glasgow, and Mr A. J. Thompson, Ayr Academy.

and improved road. No authority was given by the first Ayrshire Road Act to deal with the old one. But, in the Act of 1774, it is specified as one of a long list to which the provisions of that Act were to apply. Various powers were conferred on the trustees to be appointed for the purposes of the Act. In particular, they were



Fig. 2. Culvert on Road. From a Photograph.

authorized to alter the “situation of the roads where necessary” and “to make, or cause to be made, causeways.” A number of years elapsed before the Dalmellington road was interfered with. The first notice taken of it in the district record is in March 1799, when it was agreed to alter and improve its course from Ayr to Whitehill. By resolutions passed in the two following years, the improvements were to be extended as far as “Pennasson Burn” and afterwards to Dalmellington.

A thoroughfare of some kind must have run from Ayr in the direction

of Dalmellington from an early period. But how early, or in what condition it was at first, we have no means of satisfying ourselves. We know, however, that the road described by Chalmers and Train was constructed according to the specifications for roads, which were thought proper in this country for a century or two before the days of Macadam and Telford. "The practice," writes Macadam, "common in England, and universal in Scotland, on the formation of a new road, is, to dig a trench below the surface of the ground, and in this trench to deposit a quantity of large stones; after this a second quantity of stones, broken smaller, generally to about 7 or 8 pounds weight. These previous beds of stone are called the bottoming of the road, and are of various thickness, according to the caprice of the maker, and, generally, in proportion to the sum of money placed at his disposal. . . . That which is properly called the road is then placed on the bottoming, by putting large quantities of broken stone or gravel, generally a foot or 18 inches thick, at once upon it."<sup>1</sup>

Except that there is no mention of kerbstones, which one can readily see was not a necessary part of such a road, we have here an exact account of the construction of the old Ayr and Dalmellington highway. Scarcely a doubt need be entertained as to its approximate age and its builders.

Of the roads in this country during mediæval times—for roads there must have been—we know very little. There are, however, some grounds for believing that, from the thirteenth to end of the sixteenth century, they were better made than in the century and a half that followed, when their condition seems to have been very bad. Mediæval records and documents contain frequent references to "calsays" and roads, and show the attention that was paid to their formation and "reparation."

Beyond Dalmellington the "Roman" road of the Ordnance Map does not run in the direction indicated by Chalmers, but is a continuation of the old Ayr and Galloway (Kirkeudbright) road. An inspection of the Survey or the Armstrongs' Map will show this to be so. We are told in *Caledonia* that "after traversing Dumfriesshire, throughout the vale of the Cairn Water, by Conrig to the top of Glencairn, it passed into the

<sup>1</sup> *Remarks on the Present System of Road-making*, p. 48.

Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. It now coursed through Dalry parish to the farm of Holm in Carsphairn parish, whence it proceeds across the ridge of Polwhat to the north-west extremity of this parish, where it left the Stewartry and entered Ayrshire, going forward to Dalmellington.”<sup>1</sup>

From this passage we are bound to infer that Chalmers’ road entered Ayrshire to the north of Todden Hill. The direction, therefore, it must have taken after leaving Dalmellington was ESE and not SSE, as on the map. In this wild and hilly region there is no trace of a road of any kind till we reach the borders of Dumfriesshire, where, on the Ayrshire side of the boundary, the Ordnance map shows an isolated piece of “Roman road” about a mile in length, and rather more than the same distance west of Holm of Dalquhairn. It will be observed that the description of the road from Dumfriesshire to Dalmellington is very vague and meagre; only when Train found himself on the often trodden Ayr and Dalmellington road are particulars given. I ought to add that the *Caledonia Romana* of Stuart, both in map and text, omits the road altogether, as does the map in the *Monumenta Historica Britannica*.<sup>2</sup>

It remains to notice briefly other supposed traces of the Romans in Ayrshire that have been brought forward in support of the theory advanced by Chalmers and Train regarding the Dalmellington road.

Chalmers speaks of the finding of Roman “trinkets” in the county, meaning, no doubt, not merely small ornaments, but small manufactured articles of any kind. He also mentions the erection of Roman villas, and the discovery of Roman baths along the shores of the Firth of Clyde. But he gives no localities, or other particulars. The writer of the *New Statistical Account of Ayr* tells us “of Roman armour, swords, lances, daggers, and pieces of mail, and brazen camp-vessels,” as having been turned up in the neighbourhood of that town. These “camp-vessels,”

<sup>1</sup> *Caledonia*, vol. iii. p. 448.

<sup>2</sup> No trace of the road is to be seen on the one-inch map either of Kirkcudbright or of Dumfriesshire, nor is any reference made to it in the *New Statistical Accounts* of any of the parishes it is represented as having traversed in those counties. In that of Dunscore the remark is made that “an old Roman road passed through the parish of Kirkmahoe on the opposite side of the Nith.” Of this, however, the writer of the account of Kirkmahoe seems to have had no knowledge.

as well as those referred to in the account of the parish of Loudon, and the Dalrymple "tripod of bronze," are now known to be native and mediæval;<sup>1</sup> and, in the absence of the antiquities themselves, some proof is necessary that the writer was not equally mistaken as regards the other objects named, before we can allow them to have been Roman. The "very antique Tuscan-shaped pitcher," dug out of the Townhead quarry, is a liquor measure of no great antiquity, and the pitcher of earthenware, found in Dalrymple "on the line of the Roman road," may be a century or two older.<sup>2</sup> "A small image of bronze, representing justice with her equal weights," got on the farm of Drumshang, parish of Maybole,<sup>3</sup> is probably a letter-weight, a century or two old.

Neither Chalmers nor his correspondent Train had heard of any Roman camps in Ayrshire. Paterson asserts that three were known to exist—none of them, however, near the course of the "Roman" road. They are said by him to be, respectively, on Loudon Hill, at Avisyard, near Cumnock, and at Parkmoor, Tarbolton.<sup>4</sup> That at Avisyard has somehow dropped out of sight, and may therefore be passed over. The writer of the *New Statistical Account of Tarbolton* tells us that "at Parkmoor there is a place called the Roman Camp, where trenches are to be seen," adding, "sepulchral urns were found under cairns near the camp." On the Ordnance map "Roman Trenches" appear  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile east of Tarbolton Manse, which are doubtless the same. Their form and direction, as laid down on the twenty-five inch scale, are anything but Roman in appearance. The camp on Loudon Hill is also claimed as Roman in the *New Statistical Account of Galston*, but the writer of the *Old Account* came nearer the truth when he described it as a "rude fortification." Its shape no less than its position proves it to be British. Two circular camps on a hill in Dundonald are sometimes called Roman, but as the writer of the *Old Statistical Account* justly remarks, "their form appears sufficiently to confute that designation."

<sup>1</sup> *New Statistical Account of Ayrshire*, pp. 846, 278; and *Collections relating to the Counties of Ayr and Wigtown*, vol. iv. p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> *New Statistical Account of Ayrshire*, pp. 40, 279; and *Collections*, vol. i. pp. 81, 84.

<sup>3</sup> *New Statistical Account of Ayrshire*, p. 366.

<sup>4</sup> *History of the County of Ayr, etc.*, pp. 9, 10.

Paterson further speaks with confidence of the remains of Roman baths at Newfield, in the parish of Dundonald, at Ardrossan, and at Largs. Here again he makes statements that will not bear examination. The best local authorities in Ardrossan and in Largs have never heard of such antiquities there. The writer of the *New Statistical Account of Dundonald* says:—"Close by the mansion house of Newfield are what are said to be the remains of a Roman bath or reservoir. As the place is flooded with water, except during a very dry season, we have not been able to inspect it personally, and therefore cannot indulge the antiquarian with a description of its form."<sup>1</sup>

Recently (September 1893, since this paper was read before the Society), through the kind offices of the Rev. J. Sime, Manse of Dundonald, an opportunity was afforded me of opening up and examining this supposed bath. The site was found to be marked by a slight hollow, near the northern edge of a field, on the farm of Boghead, and not far from the steading. From this spot the ground rises very decidedly for some distance towards the south, till the ridge is reached on a flat portion of which the house and grounds of Newfield stand. The hollow and all around is now dry and under cultivation, means having been provided for draining off the water for a few feet below the surface, though further down there is abundance of it. Evidently this part of the field had been at one time a marsh or bog.

When 2 or 3 feet of the soil was removed, it was seen that a circular space had been dug, and faced with round stones, except on the south, where less of the earth had been taken away, and an opening left 10 feet wide. The bottom of the basin is paved with undressed stones of some size, placed with their flattest sides uppermost. Its diameter is about  $27\frac{1}{2}$  feet, and its depth at the south side 4 feet 9 inches from the top of the encasing wall. This depth seems to diminish towards the opening; but the point was not ascertained with accuracy.

The course of the road, which skirts the field on the north, had been altered at one time. Some of the trees that then formed a narrow plantation, part of which still remains, were cut down and the ground

<sup>1</sup> *New Statistical Account of Ayrshire*, p. 677.

improved. It was then, probably a century or more ago, that the basin was filled up; for into the deepest parts of it roots and portions of the trunks of the trees had been thrown. These roots and branches are now so interlaced as to be hard to remove. The water, besides, soon filled the space that was cleared of them, forming a pool 3 feet in depth. In consequence the attempt to clear the whole basin had to be given up. But enough was done to show clearly its construction, its dimensions, and the nature of its bottom. Toward the north there were no roots, merely earth; and large stones were lying in the opening and inwards from it, sunk into the ground as if to form a passage or roadway to the interior of the basin. Here, too, the sides of the latter consist of stones, somewhat roughly and irregularly laid upon one another. It was evident the structure, be what it may, is no bath, either Roman or native. More than one of those who saw it were of opinion that it may possibly have been once the horse-pond of the farm. It is marked on a plan of the estate, dated 1774, in a way not inconsistent with this supposition; which, however, may be taken for what it seems worth.

The task of challenging beliefs that time has made the inheritance of several generations is not always a pleasing one. One would rather find oneself led to conclusions regarding "Roman roads," "Roman camps," and "Roman baths," in accordance with popular beliefs. But in the search after truth all sentimental considerations ought to be laid aside.