

IV.

NOTES ON THE "ROMAN ROADS" OF THE ONE-INCH ORDNANCE MAP OF SCOTLAND. BY JAMES MACDONALD, LL.D., F.S.A. SCOT. PLATES III., IV., V.

3. THE DUMFRIESSHIRE ROADS.

On maps of Roman Britain, such as that in the *Monumenta Historica Britannica*, a Roman road is represented as having left the Southern Wall, near Carlisle, and proceeded northwards to Longtown on the Esk, a small market-town in Cumberland. Thence, taking a north-westerly direction, it crosses the border. Entering Dumfriesshire, it passes through Gretna parish into Kirkpatrick-Fleming. It then runs into Middlebie, goes past the well-known fort of Birrens and shortly afterwards skirts the hill of Birrenswark in Hoddam. On leaving Hoddam, it crosses the south-east part of Tundergarth and, still proceeding north-west, enters Dryfesdale. Passing to the north of the town of Lockerbie, the road runs on to Gallaberryhill, situated in the centre of an extensive holm between the Annan and the Dryfe and a short distance to the north of their confluence. Not far from this, on Torwood Moor, there were in Roy's day the remains of earthworks, described by him as one of Agricola's camps; and in the neighbourhood there is a large number of other earthworks, some of which have also been called Roman camps.

Here the road is divided. What is apparently the main branch proceeds almost due north along the valley of the Annan, keeping to the east of that river all through Applegarth and Wamphray. After entering Kirkpatrick-Juxta, it crosses the Annan and thenceforth runs on the left of that stream, passing Tassiesholm supposed to be the site

of another of Agricola's camps. Crossing the Evan, not far from its junction with the Moffat and the Annan, it ascends the hill that separates the valleys of the first and the last named of these three rivers, and proceeds in a fairly straight line along it, at first in Kirkpatrick-Juxta and afterwards in Moffat parish. At a short distance north-west from the Beef-Tub it enters Lanarkshire.

If we now look back to Dryfesdaleholm, we see a branch striking off westwards from the main road in the direction of the Nith valley and going through Lochmaben and Tinwald parishes to the village of Duncow in Kirkmahoe. There it turns northwards and, running through Closeburn and Penpont into Durisdeer, proceeds along the pass known as the Well Path. Entering Lanarkshire by the Clyde valley, it rejoins the Annandale road in the parish of Crawford.

In the north-west of Dumfriesshire a small portion of a road is marked “Roman” on the Ordnance map. It passes eastward into that county from Altry Hill, in Kirkcudbright. This isolated fragment must have been set down as Roman in the belief that traversing the valley of the Cairn it had connected the Ayr and Dalmellington road described in a former paper¹ with the Nithsdale road just referred to. No such road appears on other maps of Roman Britain.

It will thus be seen that the Dumfriesshire “Roman” roads may be regarded as forming four sections:—(1) the Lower Annandale; (2) the Upper Annandale; (3) the Nithsdale; and (4) the Cairn Valley roads. Of all of them, only detached fragments, as shown on the O.M., now remain.

1. *The Lower Annandale Road.*—On the O.M. four portions of this road are laid down—one in Kirkpatrick-Fleming, about three-quarters of a mile in length; another in Hoddam, upwards of a mile; a third, partly in Hoddam and partly in Tundergarth, nearly two miles; and a fourth in Dryfesdale, about a quarter of a mile. Its course may be said either to follow, or to run at no great distance from, the Carlisle and Glasgow road, which again has guided the engineers of the Caledonian Railway. It takes, in fact, the most natural route from the western border to the valley of the Clyde.

¹ *Proc. Soc. of Antiq. of Scotland*, vol. xxvii. pp. 417-432.

The first of these detached pieces, and the only one between the Border and Birrens, is not mentioned in either the Old or the New Statistical Account of Kirkpatrick-Fleming, and the absence of any notice of it from both is significant, as showing that the epithet "Roman" had no great hold in the locality. No doubt there had once been a road there, the course of which must have been pointed out to the Surveyors as the Annandale "Roman" highway. But almost all traces of it are now obliterated.

The *Itinerarium Septentrionale* (1727) contains the first reference to Roman roads in Dumfriesshire that I have come across. Neither Camden nor Gordon of Straloch makes any mention even of Roman camps in their notices of that county. Sir Robert Sibbald, in his *Historical Inquiries*, speaks doubtfully of there having been a Roman fort at Caerlaverock, another at what he calls the "village" of Solway, and also a "Roman port" on the Nith, somewhere below the town of Dumfries.¹ But these are his only references to Roman remains in Dumfriesshire. Yet we know that he had been furnished with accounts not only of the "Shire of Dumfries," but of the "Stewardy of Anandale" and the "Sheriffdom of Niddisdale" by correspondents who, it may be presumed, wrote with all the local knowledge of the antiquities of these districts that was then available.²

The notice of the Lower Annandale Road in the *Itinerarium* is brief, and not very definite. As far, at least, as Birrenswark, the author infers rather than asserts its existence. He speaks, indeed, of there being "a noble Roman military way" beyond that hill. But he describes the previous part of its course in words that seem to leave a choice between two different routes. First of all he selects Birrenswark, at the foot of which are certain earthworks that, owing apparently to their form, he sets down as Roman camps, and makes the hill to have been Agricola's first halting-place in Scotland. He then speculates as to the part of the country the Roman general probably traversed in order to reach this spot. Agricola, he implies, must have used some road, which then or afterwards became a Roman road and was continued as far as his conquests extended.

¹ Sibbald, *Historical Inquiries*, p. 36.

² Nicolson's *Scottish Historical Library*, pp. 19-21.

In the text of the *Itinerarium* Gordon inclines to the opinion that the invader, after subjugating the island of Mona (Anglesey), marched northwards as directly as possible, crossing the upper part of the Solway Firth at ebb tide and pushing forward to Birrenswark, where he rested for a time. He takes into account, however, the possibility of the sea-level around our coasts being higher in Agricola's day than it is now, and admits that the Romans may have been obliged to cross much further up. Their advance on Birrenswark would then take place along the “Roman way” laid down on his map. In either case, Agricola, he believes, encamped on this hill for a longer or shorter period before penetrating into the country beyond. Sufficient proof of this Gordon finds in the earthworks already mentioned, the larger thrown up on its southern, and the smaller on its northern slope. These he at once connected with Agricola. Of a somewhat rectilinear shape, they are each surrounded by a well-marked rampart and a ditch. The larger incloses a space 900 feet long by 600 feet broad. It has three openings or gates on each side and one in each end. A spring of water bubbles up not far from its centre, flowing downwards in an unfailling stream. A small inclosure in its north-east angle has been supposed to be the *Prætorium*; and there seems to have been another, somewhat similar, on the south side of the western entrance, which, however, had not been observed by Gordon. The smaller earthwork is of the same length as the larger, but only half the width; and it had but two gates in each side, with one at each end. All the openings in the sides and ends have been protected by mounds now circular, but probably not so as planned, raised in front of them. Another peculiarity is that both earthworks had apparently been joined, at least on the eastern side of the hill, by a continuous rampart, with intermediate “posts.” Accordingly, Gordon regards the “two squares or divisions” as forming but one encampment—“the first Roman camp of any to be met with in the South of Scotland, and the most entire and best preserved I ever saw.”¹

Two miles south-east of Birrenswark is Middleby or Birrens Fort, likewise “discovered” by Gordon. He describes it as an inclosure the

¹ *Itinerarium Septentrionale*, p. 16.

interior area of which measured 467 feet by 349 feet. It is of an oblong form, surrounded by four ditches and five ramparts, with four openings into the interior. The plan he gives represents it as complete and entire; but in the text we are informed that the Water of Mein and the Haughill Burn—two small streams that meet close by it—“have, when in flood, carried away a great part of the agger and ditches on one side.” To subsequent observers there appeared to have been as many as seven ramparts and six ditches at the northern end, as well as an outer entrenchment or “Procestrium” on the west side of the fort, which “was crossed obliquely by the Roman way to Clydesdale.”¹ Gordon conjectures that Birrens “might have been built by Agricola, by way of an exploratory castellum to the noble camp of Birrenswark.” Roy, on the other hand, takes Birrens to have been the Roman headquarters, and regards the Birrenswark inclosures as summer outposts. He differs, too, from Gordon as to the date of the latter, believing that the mounds in front of the openings are evidence that the “camps” belong to a later era of Roman military field-work,—as late, perhaps, as Hadrian.

In support of the Roman origin of all these “camps,” Gordon has little to adduce—nothing, indeed, in the case of Birrenswark—except his own belief that they were constructed by the soldiers of Agricola. At Birrens he saw long hollow square stones, a stone-arched vault, marks of stone buildings and one stone with Roman letters upon it “but so defaced that it was unintelligible.” He does not explicitly say that these objects or any of them were the work of the Romans. He adds, indeed, that several Roman coins and a gold medal of Constantius Chlorus had been found there. The presence, however, of such portable articles can hardly be regarded as sufficient to establish his main proposition.

But in 1731 a notable discovery was made at Birrens, which seemed to justify so far the views Gordon had expressed regarding the fort. This was the sculptured figure of the goddess Brigantia, an altar dedicated to Mercury, and the inscribed pedestal of a statue of Mercury—all of which were afterwards deposited in the Penicuik Collection of

¹ Roy, *Military Antiquities*, p. 119, and Plate XXIV. Stuart, *Caledonia Romana*, p. 123.

Antiquities.¹ The circumstances under which they were secured by “Baron Clerk” had best be related in his own words. In a marginal note to *Memoirs of My Life*, he writes :—“About this time (1731) the fine pieces of antiquity now at Penicuik were found near the Roman camp at Middlebie. They consist of a statue of the goddess Brigantia and two altars inscribed to Mercury. These stood in a little temple which, by age, had fallen down and become a ruinous kind of heap. These ruins were in the grounds of a poor lady. She caused some stones to be made use of for building a little stable. When I chanced to pass the way I discovered the stones, and gave the poor lady two guineas for them. I consider these antiquities the chief of the kind now in Britain, and therefore I wrote a Latin dissertation upon them, that at least posterity may not despise and destroy them.” In a subsequent note he describes the spot where they were found as being “on the side of the antient Roman camp at Middlebee.”² Besides these antiquities there are a number of other altars and inscribed stones, now in the Scottish National Museum and elsewhere, that were subsequently found at Birrens.³

Gordon was thus, either by intuition or by accident, right when he fixed on Birrens as the site of a Roman encampment, although it was probably something more than a *castra æstiva* subsidiary to Birrenswark. Only a station or fort could, in the circumstances, have yielded so many lapidary relics of Roman times. We are not, however, to jump to the conclusion that the ramparts of Birrens, as now to be seen, are all a part of the original Roman fort. There is nothing in the classical writers to show that the Romans practised such a mode of fortification. Circumstances may be conceived that would lead them to adopt it in order to meet exigencies new to them. But, before seeking to particularise these exigencies, it is necessary to prove that the defences in question are really what they are assumed to be.

¹ These sculptures were presented to the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland in 1857 by Sir George Clerk, Bart.

² Clerk's *Memoirs of My Life*, pp. 138-140 and p. 222.

³ Pennant's *Tour in Scotland*, vol. iii. pp. 406-410; Wilson's *Archæology and Prehist. Annals of Scotland*, vol. ii. pp. 68-71.

For, whatever purpose the multiplication of ramparts was intended to serve, it was an expedient frequently resorted to by the builders of our own hill and other forts. These hill forts had peculiarities of their own. The ramparts rose one above another round the summit of the hill; the spaces between them were less uniform in breadth than the representations of Birrens given by Gordon and Roy show its lines to have been; and the shape of the whole entrenchment was oval or circular instead of rectilinear. There were probably differences of even greater importance. But the principle of the double, triple, or quadruple agger or ditch is there. The hill fort of Barmekyne in Aberdeenshire may be cited as an example.¹ In different parts of the country are small square "redoubts," surrounded by double ramparts and trenches. One of them described by Dr Christison is situated on the downward slope of Laverhay Height in Wamphray Glen. The spot is desolate enough now, but in its neighbourhood there was, three or four centuries ago, a considerable population. A rill with a Scandinavian name flows past it, within a few yards of its north side. In appearance it is a miniature Birrens, with fewer mounds and ditches but, as Birrens seems to have been and as Chew Green and Ardoch certainly were, "directly connected," to use Dr Christison's words, "with an extensive system of rectilinear works."² Triple ramparts and ditches, drawn across the headland, with a gate near the centre, defended the only approach to the fort that once occupied the extremity of Burghead on the Moray Firth—known to have been held first by the natives and afterwards by the Norsemen.³ A similar series of mounds with intervening fosses had been thrown up outside the peninsular fort of Dunbeg in the county of Donegal.⁴ There must have been conditions in the warfare of other days, common probably to more than one race, under which it was thought that the assault of an enemy on a stronghold could be most successfully resisted by adding to the number of its

¹ *Archæologia Scotica*, vol. ii. pp. 324-327.

² *Proc. Soc. of Antiq. of Scotland*, vol. xxv. pp. 228-229; Roy, *Military Antiquities*, Plates XXIV., XXII., XX.

³ *Proc. Soc. of Antiq. of Scotland*, vol. iv. pp. 321-369.

⁴ *Archæological Journal*, vol. xv. pp. 2-5.

lines of defence. Further research may, therefore, yet furnish an answer to the question sometimes put, If Birrens is not Roman, what is it? Nor ought we to lay undue stress on the finding of Roman antiquities there. With the exception of those once at Penicuik, the exact spot where the sculptures were found has unfortunately not been noted. Sir John Clerk's, however, were certainly located outside the mounds and ditches. What connection, if any, they ever had with the present fort cannot now be determined. Roy, aware that they were not found inside the ramparts, thought he saw traces of other mounds within which they had been placed, and which he calls a Procestrium or addition to the fort. But, instead of being of the same age as the fort, they may have been cleared away from their original position to make room for it, and afterwards protected as Sir John Clerk suggests. For, according to another marginal note to the *Memoirs*, the building in which they stood was not of Roman construction. “I doubt not,” the “Baron” remarks, “but some great men in England who are (were?) lovers of antiquity have so far revered the heathen religion as to have built a temple for the sake of this statue. It is certain, as Tacitus writes in his *Agricola*, that the Brigantes were the most powerful nation in Britain, and that with probability this statue was like another Diana of Ephesus.”¹ The Romans, and, we may suppose, the Romanised natives after their

¹ *Memoirs of my Life*, p. 157. It may be added that Sir John Clerk's references to the exact spot where the sculptures were found are not altogether consistent. In a short notice of them, said to be written by him, which is given in “Additions and Corrections” to the *Itinerarium* (1732), we read:—“These three stones were found last July in an ancient fortification or camp call'd The Birrens.” Here there is no mention of a temple. But in his Latin dissertation, written in 1743, though not printed till 1750, we have a fuller description of it than on the margin of the *Memoirs*, with the possibility of the temple having been a Roman shrine put forth as an alternative:—“Anno MDCCXXXI, in provincia Annandiana, apud Scoto-Britannos detectae fuerunt antiqui aedificii ruinae, prope castra ea Romana stativa ex lapide quadrato, quae in parochia Middelbea conspiciuntur. Ex forma ejus brevi apparuit, templum seu delubrum Romanum id fuisse, deo Mercurio et deae Brigantiae consecratum: nam in ejus area disjecta fracta jacebant monumenta, de quibus nunc disserendum est. Ex lapide quadrato constructum erat, longum triginta sex pedes, latum circiter duodecim; haud inelegans, sed insignioribus architecturae ornamentis vacuum. In loco paululum humido situm erat extra castrorum munimenta, quasi

example or on their advice, selected the position of their stations with such care that succeeding peoples would readily fix their settlements in the same localities. To Roman camps (*castra*) some of the most important towns of the England of to-day owe, if not their origin, at least the beginning of their greatness.

It seems to follow that, in the present state of our knowledge, it is unsafe to come to any conclusion as to the age and nationality of the builders of the present Birrens fort, or its connection with the antiquities that have been found in it or near it. What a careful and thorough excavation of the whole site might reveal, no one can say. Unless, however, this could be carried out under proper supervision, Birrens had better be left as it is. Unskilful hands might destroy the mounds, and leave the problem it presents unsolved.

It is natural to suppose that if the Romans were established at Birrens, they would avail themselves, for the purpose of observation, of the very remarkable hill of Birrenswark. It is not high, it is easy of ascent, it is at no great distance, and it commands an extensive prospect of the country in all directions. In the event of their having done so, there was probably a road between the two places, of which one or both of the bits of road in Hoddam and Tundergarth marked on the O.M. as Roman, may be the remains, or they may at least occupy the track. But no clear evidence of a Roman occupation exists here, as in the case of Birrens; and for this and other reasons the formation of the road by the Romans becomes doubtful. The two rectilinear inclosures constitute the chief claim of Birrenswark to be the site of a Roman camp. It has, however, yet to be shown that the belief, so prevalent since Gordon wrote, which ascribes all these and similar works to the Romans, has any real foundation.¹ Last July

nullis humanis praesidiis egeret, sed deorum Romanorum curae atque providentiae committeretur." (*Dissertatio de Monumentis quibusdam Romanis*, pp. 5, 6). The marginal Notes were probably written later than the Latin dissertation.

¹ Bishop Pococke, who visited Birrenswark in 1750, remarks:—"The people say that (the camp) to the south was made by King Charles his army, and they certainly did encamp on it." Following Gordon and Horsley, he adds that there is no doubt they are both Roman works, and supposed to be the *castra aestiva* of Blatum Bulgium. *Tours in Scotland*, p. 7.

General Pitt-Rivers communicated to the Wiltshire Archæological and Natural History Society an account of the excavation of a squarish intrenchment at Rushmore Park. Its sides are somewhat irregular, and not in straight lines “as,” he remarks, “a Roman camp would probably have been.” It has an opening only in one of its sides. But its general resemblance to some of the camps in North Britain that have been set down as Roman is striking enough. In the course of the excavation numerous relics of the Bronze Age were found, which, from their position, proved beyond question that this camp belonged to that period. There were also Roman relics, especially fragments of pottery, mostly Romano-British. But no other inference could be drawn from their position relative to the British relics than that the camp had, subsequent to its construction, been occupied for a time by the Romans or, more probably, frequented by Romanised Britons.¹ Col. Lane-Fox, in his paper on the Roovesmore Fort or Rath, County Cork, remarks:—“Besides these circular raths, some of which have double and triple banks and ditches, oval intrenchments of the same kind are sometimes, though rarely, found; and in the central and southern parts of Munster, rectilinear works of nearly the same superficial area are distributed in belts over the most fertile parts of the country.”²

In a paper on the forts, camps and motes of Lanarkshire, read before this Society some years ago, Dr Christison has stated, briefly but clearly, the difficulties that surround the subject.³ It has been said, and no doubt with a considerable degree of truth, that the rectilinear works of a primitive race may generally be distinguished from those of one more advanced by the regularity or irregularity of their lines, the former having been laid down by the eye, the latter by the measuring-rod. But was the rod or line used for this purpose only by the Romans? Besides, we must make sure that the plans from which we form our opinion of the camps are accurate before accepting them as sufficient evidence. The necessity of this in the case of Birrenswark is shown by a comparison of the plans of its two inclosures given by

¹ *Wiltshire Archæol. and Nat. Hist. Magazine*, vol. xxvii. p. 206.

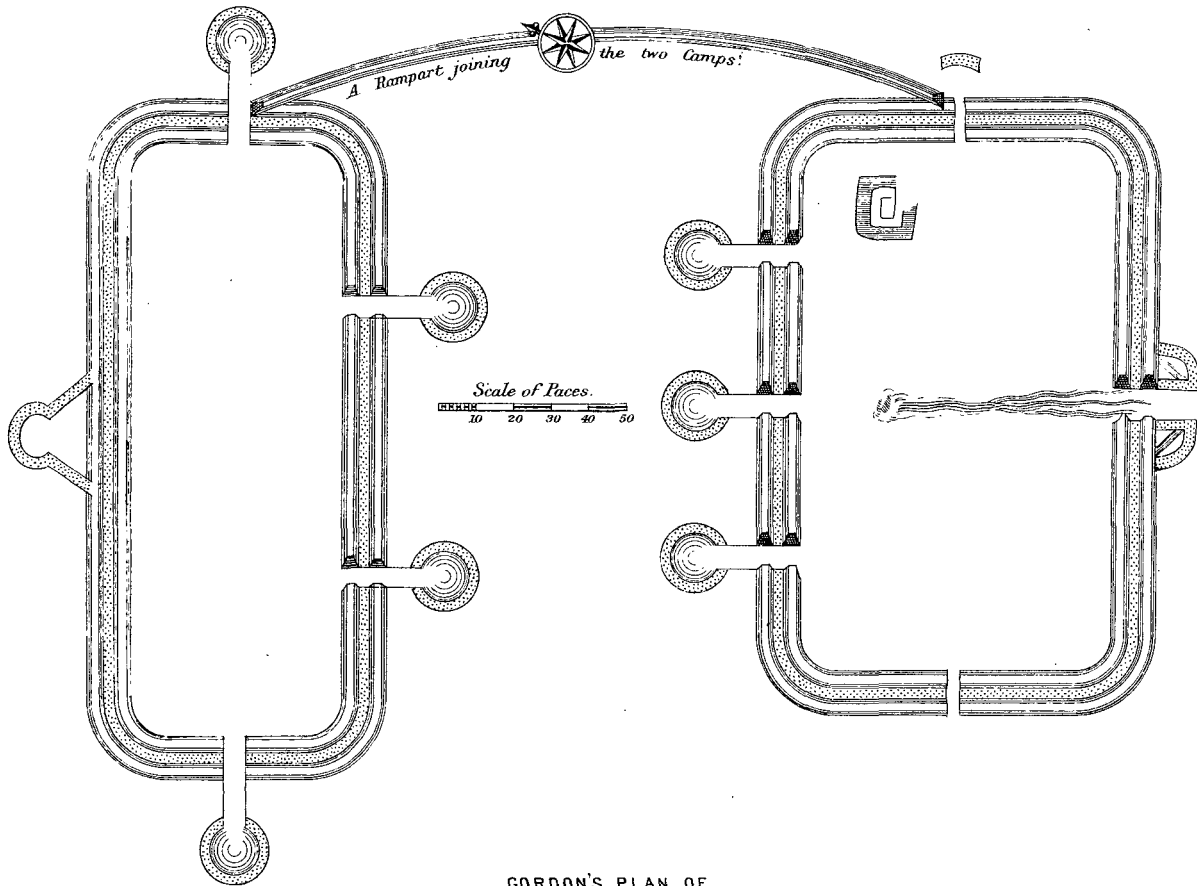
² *Archæological Journal*, vol. xxiv. p. 139.

³ *Proc. Soc. of Antiq. of Scotland*, vol. xxiv. p. 293.

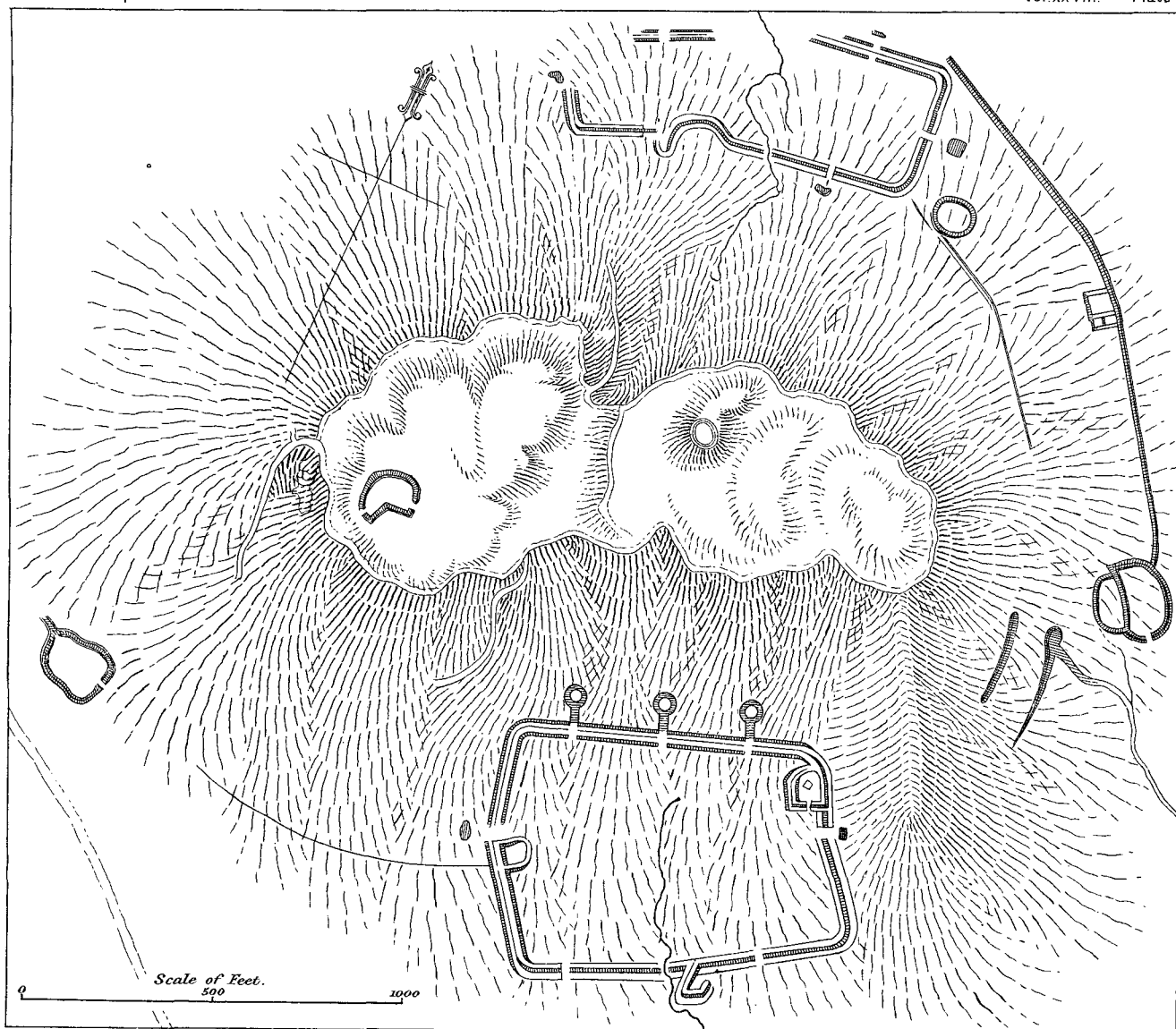
Gordon and Roy respectively. They are represented by Gordon, as shown on a somewhat reduced scale in Plate III. But in Roy's plate they assume the form in which they appear, also on a slightly reduced scale, in Plate IV.

No one would suppose on first looking at these two Plates that the same set of earth-works was delineated on each of them. The geometrical precision of the one set contrasts strongly with the marked irregularities of the other. Gordon seems to have thought himself entitled to represent "Roman camps" not as he saw them, but as he thought they had been, or ought to have been, where newly made. Nor was he singular in this respect among the antiquaries of last century. Even Roy was far from faultless.

It must not be forgotten, when we are investigating the origin of such remains as are still to be seen at Birrens and on the sides of Birrenswark Hill, that we know far too little about the military methods and social arrangements of the different peoples that inhabited the country before the *Norman Conquest*, and even for centuries later, to entitle us to ignore their presence in the country. All inclosures of the kind were, from some point of view, defensive in their object, and some of them were no doubt camps—it may be, Roman camps. But there are grounds for believing that in others there had stood the dwelling of the petty lord of the district, built perhaps of wood, while the huts of his chief dependents were within the same ramparts. That the Romans protected their temporary as well as their stationary camps with a vallum and a ditch, as rectilinear in form as the nature of the ground would admit, is no proof that this particular mode of fortification was peculiar to them. Besides, it has just been pointed out that camps of this form are found which cannot be the work of the Romans, whose example, however, would be followed by those with whom they came into hostile contact. Cæsar informs us that some of the tribes of Gaul that took up arms against him began after a time to fortify their camps in imitation of the Romans. It is but reasonable to suppose that other peoples to whom the Roman mode of warfare had become familiar would act as the Gauls did. Some other evidence, therefore, than the shape of an ancient earth-work is necessary before it can with certainty be classed as Roman, and before it



GORDON'S PLAN OF
THE "ROMAN CAMP" OF BIRRENSWARK.



ROY'S PLAN OF BIRRENSWARK HILL IN ANNANDALE WITH "ROMAN" CAMPS & C

G. WATERSTON & SONS LITHO.

can be held to prove that a road leading to it, or past it, is the work of the Romans. When we consider that Lower Annandale was in possession of Gael, Roman, Scot, Saxon and Dane successively, no surprise need be felt if it affords examples of more than one variety of ancient camp or fort. Whether we shall ever be able, with the aid of the data now left us, to distinguish the intrenchments of different nationalities or periods, it is hard to say. But if we cannot untie the knot, we should not cut it.

While, however, so far as the evidence goes, the present Birrenswark “camps” may or may not be Roman, it is conceivable, as has been already observed, that the Romans may have used this prominent hill as a post of observation in connection with Birrens. If they did, it would be rash to affirm that the two pieces of road running through the parishes of Hoddam and Tundergarth—the one for about a mile east, and the other for two miles west of it—were not roads or track-ways at the time of the Roman occupation. Little appearance of a road, however, is now to be seen where they are marked on the O.M. But recently, beneath a few inches of turf on the track of the western one, near the farm of Courstein, a road was exposed, 18 feet wide, with a rise in the centre of about 6 inches. Small flattish stones lay embedded in its surface, which had almost no other appearance of having been artificially formed. These stones were more carefully laid on the level sides than in the centre. There were neither kerb-stones, ditches nor mounds. The place where it crosses the river Milk used to be known as the Drove Ford¹—an appellation that indicated, we may be sure, the chief purpose for which the road had at one time been used. In neither of the Old Statistical Accounts of the two parishes, nor in the old account of Hoddam, is there any reference to a Roman road. In the more recent one of Tundergarth, however, we read of one, “discovered a few years ago,” of which the following account is given:—“The road was covered with about 9 inches of earth. It is formed of broad, flat stones, well packed together, with water and sand in the interstices. It is about 8 feet wide.”² If this

¹ Singer's *General View of Agriculture in the County of Dumfries*, p. 639.

² *New Stat. Acc. of Dumfriesshire*, p. 197.

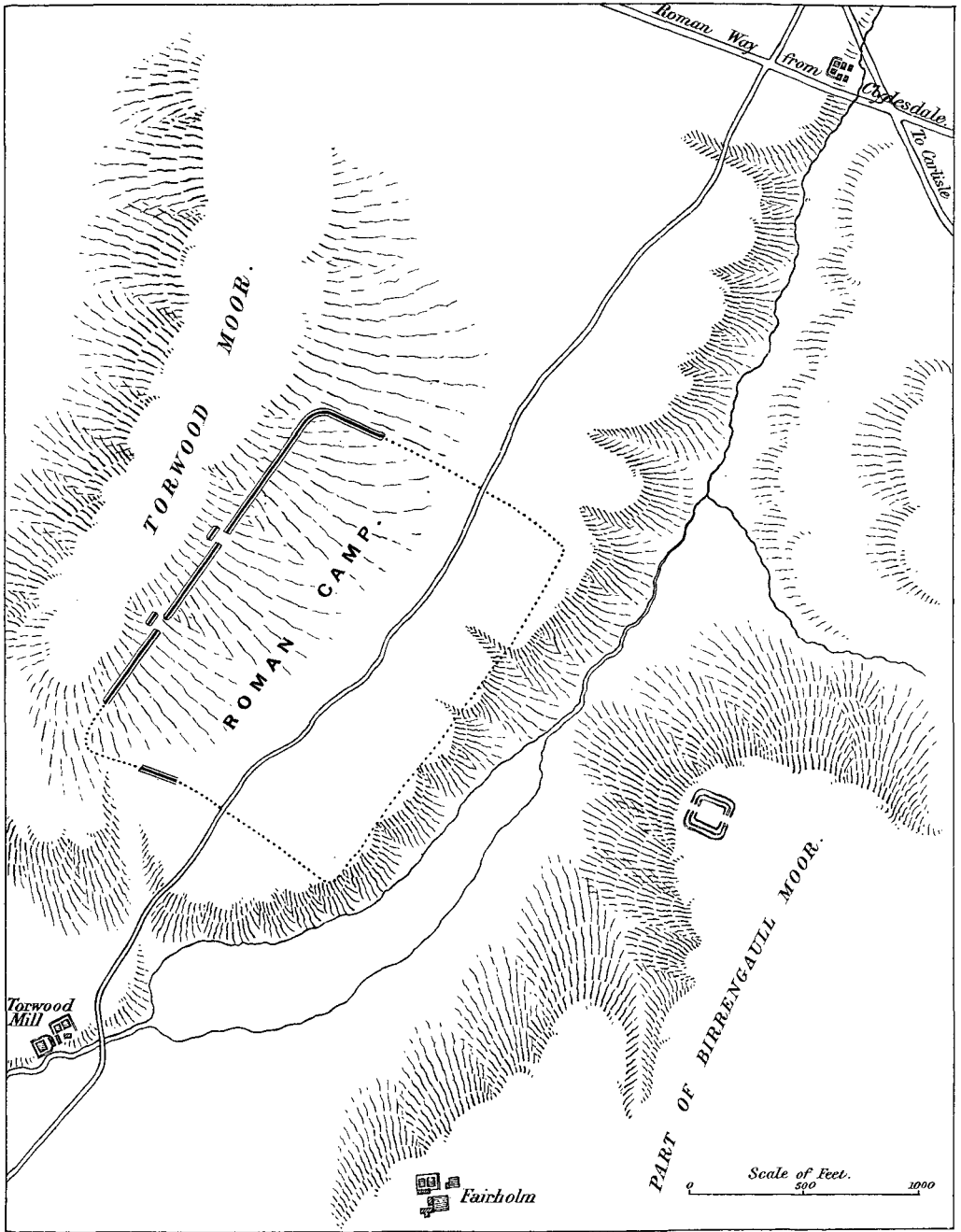
refers to the road of the O.M., their difference in width at two places, which must have been near one another, is not easily accounted for.

The fourth and smallest portion now left of the Lower Annandale Road goes off from the Carlisle and Glasgow Road two miles or so north of Lockerbie, and leads up to and past the manse of Dryfesdale. It is in daily use, and in no way differs from an old parish road. A short distance south-west of it is the site of the Torwood Moor "camp," mentioned above, which Roy considered to be Roman and connected with the road.

In a dissertation on the ancient system of Roman castrametation, Roy, chiefly on the authority of Polybius, explains the earlier form of a Roman temporary camp and afterwards identifies as such this Torwood Moor inclosure and a number of other earth-works, more or less entire in his day, which he describes and figures. Most of these, he thinks, are Roman camps which were actually occupied by Agricola during his campaigns in North Britain. This conclusion he reaches on the ground that a different system of castrametation, generally known as the Hyginian, is supposed to have come into use among the Romans shortly after Agricola's day. Polybian camps in Scotland, therefore, which he asserts are of two kinds, a greater and a smaller, must mark the course of Agricola. Three of them, all of the smaller kind, he found in the West, between the Border and the Antonine Wall—Torwood and Tassiesholm in Annandale, and Cleghorn in Lanarkshire.

Of Torwood he thus writes:—"The first camp we meet with on the Western coast (besides those at Birrenswark Hill, which, being of a different construction, seem not to have been the work of Agricola) is situated on Torwood Moor, near Lockerby, in Annandale. The greatest part of one side, with its two complete gates, and likewise a part of each end, remain entire." This camp Roy estimates would contain an army of from ten to eleven thousand men.¹ Its gates had been protected by "straight traverses" instead of quasi-circular mounds as at Birrenswark, and its form was apparently somewhat irregular. No Roman antiquities

¹ *Mil. Antiq. of the Romans in Britain*, p. 61.



ROY'S PLAN OF "AGRICOLA'S CAMP" ON TORWOOD MOOR.

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have been found near it. It was entirely on account of its shape that it was supposed to be Roman. Roy’s plan of it is reproduced, on a smaller scale, on Plate V.

According to the *Old Statistical Account*, there are in this part of Dryfesdale “evident remains of eight camps or forts, some square or Roman, others circular or British. . . . The most remarkable are two—the one British and the other Roman—facing each other, and separated by a narrow morass. They are built on two hills east of the village of Bengall, the name alluding to the forts in the hills, signifying the Hill of the Gauls.¹ Old pieces of armour and warlike weapons have frequently been found in them, and not many years since the skeleton of a man was found in a cairn on the intervening morass, thought to have been laid there for some ages, and some fragments of his dress or accoutrements were carried off as a curiosity, particularly his sandals, curiously wrought, and bound around the mouths with leathern thongs, were conveyed into England for the Oxford Museum. There is another, a Roman fort, beautifully situated upon a large eminence, in the centre of the united and extensive holm of Dryfe and Annan, called the Gallaberry, or the burgh and station of the Gauls; for the term *berry* is of Saxon origin, signifying ‘burgh, mansion, or strength.’ The most entire is a British one at Dryfesdale gate, occupying about two acres of ground, commanding a most extensive prospect: its counterpart is a large Roman one, about half a mile due east, interrupted by a moor, being the place celebrated for the bloody battle between the army of Julius Agricola and the forces of Corbredus

¹ It is very doubtful if the Romans were ever spoken of by the natives of North Britain as Gauls. But, as Dr Anderson informs me, the Norwegian and Danish invaders of the Viking period (*i.e.*, the eighth to the eleventh century) are generally referred to by the Irish chroniclers as “The Gaill.” Now the chief centre of Norwegian-Danish place-names in Scotland is in Dumfriesshire. The Scandinavians, migrating from Cumberland, where at one time their numbers were considerable, crossed the Liddel and Esk, spreading themselves westwards as far as the Nith. Everywhere throughout this district evidence is still borne to the fact by such names as Middleby, Applegarth, Tinwald, Torbeck, Thorniewhat, &c. Bengall and Gallaberry may swell the list, and the camps in the holm of Dryfesdale are, perhaps, other memorials of the same period of Annandale history. Cp. Worsaae’s *Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland*, p. 203.

Galdus, the twenty-first king of the Scots, about the end of the first century."¹

This extract shows on what slender grounds certain inclosures and forts were in past days classified either as British or as Roman camps, as the case might be. No search was made for antiquities near or within their lines. The absence of these might have been deemed immaterial had any satisfactory evidence of another kind been offered. But nothing of the sort was adduced. Thus an inclosure supposed, without further inquiry, to be a Roman camp, was held to vouch for the origin of a piece of disused road near it. Sometimes, again, the process was reversed, and the existence of an old road vouched for the Roman origin of a "camp."

2. *The Upper Annandale Road.*—From Gallaberry Hill the principal "Roman road" goes northwards, keeping along the east side of the Annan through Applegarth. "A Roman road," says the writer of the *New Statistical Account*, "also traverses the parish in a northerly direction: it may be traced in nine places for several hundred yards above the level of the adjoining ground." The road then enters Wamphray, in the *Account* of which we read:—"There appears to have been a Roman road for 4 or 5 miles through this parish, from north to south, near to the old road from Glasgow to Carlisle, which is still a turnpike road, and where, in some places, pavement stones are occasionally dug up, especially on the lower grounds, where there are a few houses, forming a small village, called Gilgal or Newton. Along this line, too, are several large stones, about 5 or 6 feet in height, fixed firmly and perpendicularly in the ground, and supposed to have been placed there by the Romans, probably for measuring distances. Several traces of camps, supposed by some to be Roman, by others British, are also visible in this parish."

Little evidence of a positive nature can be said to be contained in these extracts; but, as nothing stronger has been brought forward in favour of this portion of the road being Roman, it has been thought fair to quote them. All that the writer of the Wamphray notice feels himself warranted to say is, that "there appears" to have been a Roman

¹ *Old Stat. Acc. of Scotland*, vol. ix. p. 425. See also *New Stat. Acc. of Dryfesdale*, p. 453.

road there. The reference to the “milestones,” which is taken from the *Old Statistical Account*, is not given quite accurately. According to the earlier writer, they are “nearly at the distance of a Scotch mile from one another, and therefore supposed by some to have been mile-stones.” Very likely his successor saw the incongruity of making the Romans measure the distances on any of their roads by “lang Scots miles”; and thought it judicious, when expressing a not very confident belief that they were placed there by that people, to avoid weakening his case still further by stating how far they are apart. One or two of these stones, I believe, still remain.

Crossing Wamphray Water, and afterwards the Annan, at “Burn-foot of Kirkpatrick” according to Roy, the road proceeds thence along the west branch of the latter river and passes at Tassiesholm, on the farm of Milton, what Roy took for the second of Agricola’s camps. He writes of it, however, with considerable doubt. “As no gate exists,” he says, “and only a very small part of the intrenchment, the vestiges must be considered as too slight to enable us to pronounce absolutely on the head.” Besides the only angle of the inclosure that remained, Roy shows in his plate, quite close to it, “a square redoubt.” No trace of the angle now remains, if it ever existed. The “redoubt,” Dr Christison was informed, is known locally as the “moteknowe.” It has been so levelled by ploughing that, though its outlines can be distinctly traced, the class of works to which it belonged cannot be identified. It may be noted that a similar “redoubt” is shown on Roy’s plate near the Torwood Moor camp, as may be seen on Plate V. Dr Christison adds:—“A ‘Roman road’ is marked close to the east of it on the O.M., but I could see no trace of it. Roy marks his Roman road on the edge of the bank of the Annan, where there is now a farm road.” This difference between authorities as to the exact course of our Roman roads is by no means uncommon.

The writer of the *Old Statistical Account* states that he made some excavations at Tassiesholm, or Tatius-holm, as he writes it. “Upon digging, I could only find some earthenware in fragments, very strong and coarse. I have procured from the people who have tilled the adjoining fields a few bits of green and party-coloured glass, and small

pieces of a substance resembling marble, about half an inch broad, round, smooth, and flat on one side."¹ An examination of the place so incomplete cannot be held as conclusive; but, as far as it goes, it tends to show that the holm was the site of a native settlement rather than of a Roman camp. The belief, however, that it was a "camp," and that a Roman road ran near it, is prevalent in the locality; and one of the proofs by which it is attempted to support the popular view is amusing. A little to the west are a few houses, often called collectively Hop-pertuttie; and this has been gravely supposed to be a corruption of *oppidum* and *Tatius*, "the name of one of Agricola's generals" otherwise unknown to fame!

Shortly after crossing the Evan the road ascends the Coates Hill, and soon becomes visible. Its course may be traced by being in some places slightly raised above the surface of the ground, and, as the season advances, by the lighter colour of the herbage on its surface. It runs all along the ridge between the two rivers, not exactly on the summit, but a short way down from it on the Annan side. Its track is almost straight till it enters Lanarkshire, there being no obstacle in its way, and no reason for any deviation. With the exception of the Chapel farm, where it disappears, no part of the ground is under cultivation.

Trenches were cut across it last summer on several parts of the ridge. These showed that the mode of construction was far from uniform, and precluded the idea that it had been made according to any fixed plan. It was first opened on the Chapel Hill, a short distance north from the cross road to Evan Water. On the turf being removed, the surface was found to be slightly raised in the centre, with a slope to each side, and to be covered with a layer of small stones 4 inches deep. Beneath this was another layer of larger stones, 11 inches deep, mixed with and resting on a bed of clay, the largest stones being at the bottom. There was no appearance of pavement, or even of a causeway; but on the west side, for a breadth of 6 or 7 feet, were large stones, placed with their flat sides uppermost, and large interstices between them. They spoiled the original contour of the roadway, and were probably an after-

¹ *Old Stat. Acc. of Scotland*, vol. iv. p. 522.

thought, laid down to form a kind of pathway for the use of passengers in wet weather, the vacant spaces having been filled in with earth or gravel. There was also a single row of large stones near the edge of the east side, but not placed in close or regular order. All the stones were undressed, and had been got near the spot. The breadth of this part of the road was 21 feet, and its depth, as far as the bed of clay, 17 inches in the centre, and 12 to 14 at the sides. Mr John T. Johnstone, Moffat, who was of much service to me and took a great interest in the excavations, is of opinion that the foundation bed of clay had been brought to the spot from some distance. He believes it to differ from the ordinary till which covers the ridge, and to be such as is found beneath the shallow layers of moss in the neighbourhood. I was at first disposed to think the same. It was difficult, however, to see what object could be gained by going to any distance for the clay; and on cutting into the hill close by, clay of a similar light colour was found in abundance. I suspect, therefore, that the layer at the bottom is *in situ*.

In other cuttings made at short distances north and south of the one now described, the appearances were similar, but the road was shallower and less material had been used in its construction. Here and there were some very large stones embedded in it, almost boulders. It was also laid open near the footpath over Coates Hill, a mile south of the Chapel Hill cutting, and at Meikleholmside Hill, two miles to the north. In the first of these cuttings there was at the bottom, instead of clay, a layer of moss, the stones throughout were smaller and there was no clay mixed with them. In this place the road was only 15 feet wide. There were some stones that might have been meant for a footpath, but on the east instead of the west side. At Meikleholmside it was of the same width as at Chapel Hill, without, however, stones on either side. It was quite flat on the surface. Here the stones in the roadway were mostly small, those at the bottom being mixed with clay. All along its course small pits may be seen, out of which materials had been taken to make or repair the road.

We appear to have very early mention of roads in Annandale. Mr George Neilson in a lecture¹ delivered a few years ago before the

¹ *Annandale under the Bruces*, p. 7.

Glasgow Annandale Association, directed attention to a charter of David I., still in existence, granting the lands of Annandale (“the valley of Anant”), *in forest*, to Robert de Brus, sometime after 1124, and containing a clause that forbade any one else to hunt in or go through the said forest, “except by the straight road appointed”: *Et ne ullus eat per predictum forestum nisi recta via nominata*.¹ Mr Neilson informs me that *recta via*—a phrase here by no means free of difficulties—is found elsewhere in mediæval writings in the indubitable sense of an actual road, and that he is strongly inclined to believe that there is little difference between it and “highway.” In another charter we read of “the great way (*magna via*) which goes from Blawath to the Church of Reinpatrick” (in Gretna parish, Lower Annandale).²

3. *The Nithsdale Road*.—One portion of this road appears on the Map a little to the north-west of Lochmaben, and another in Tinwald parish, not far from Amisfield. Near the former is Wood Castle, a circular fort, called by Roy “Roman.” “But,” remarks Dr Christison, who examined it carefully, “although unusually massive, it does not seem to differ essentially from the ordinary forts of the country.”³ Both portions of road have the appearance of old parish roads and are still partially open.

The road next appears as the Well Path in the north of Durisdeer, the intermediate part of its course being left to conjecture, so far as the O.M. is concerned. The Well Path is very much what its name implies—a narrow roadway of very primitive construction, now overgrown with grass and passable only on foot.

4. *The Cairn Valley Road*.—The small piece of “Roman” road that enters the north-west of Dumfriesshire from Kirkeudbright and is unknown to other maps of Roman Britain must owe its place in the O.M. to the communication made to George Chalmers by Joseph Train, who represented a Roman road as “traversing Dumfriesshire through the vale of the Cairn Water, by Conrig, to the top of Glencairn.”⁴

¹ *National MSS. of Scotland*, vol. i., Plate xx.

² *Lib. de Melros*, pp. 668-9.

³ *Proc. Soc. of Antiq. of Scotland*, vol. xxv. p. 252.

⁴ *Caledonia*, vol. iii. p. 448.

Dr Singer speaks of a road that turned "off to the west from the Nithsdale road, crossing the Nith and passing through Tynron by Scarwater" and thence doubtless to Kirkeudbrightshire. Being accepted by some local historians, such a "Roman" road became part of the popular belief. The situation of this isolated fragment is lofty, exposed and bleak, overlooking the sources of the Ken, the Skarr, the Shinnel and the Dalwhat. It is a path rather than a road. The till that covers the hill top has been levelled and slightly hollowed for a width of about 8 feet. Some earth and stones have been laid on it, or else afterwards used for repairs. It is difficult to see what purpose it could have served, though it must have had one. Within sight of it the positions of similar roads were pointed out by an intelligent shepherd who knew the ground well, some of them, he said, much better made. He thought he could trace how most of them led from these lonely wilds into the plains below. But where the one we stood on came from, or whither it went, he was unable to say.

It is not unlikely that the road spoken of by Train may be the one mentioned in a charter (*temp. Reg. Alex. II.*), to which my attention has been drawn by Mr Neilson. It is described as the "King's highway" (*regia via*) leading from Dercongall (*i.e.*, Holywood, near Dumfries) on to Glencairn and thence to "the passage across the marsh of Athenweran."¹

The conjectural Eskdale "Roman" Road of the *Monumenta* map may, for the sake of completeness, be also mentioned here. It is supposed to have led from Netherby for some distance up the right bank of the Esk, and then to have gone northwards to Trimontium (Eildon Hills). Another branch of it is said to have continued its course along the Esk to Castle O'er and Raeburnfoot. According to the *New Statistical Account*, the manse of Kirkmichael occupies the site of a castellum that was approached by a Roman road. One or two others are noticed by various writers. Dr Singer states that Sir John Clerk took great pains to trace all the supposed Roman roads in Dumfriesshire.

Apart from the Birrens sculptures, almost no undoubted Roman

¹ *Lib. de Melros*, p. 183.

antiquities have been found within Dumfriesshire, except a few coins ; for urns classed as "Roman" by the older authorities are certainly British. The Roman origin of the "camps" and roads north of Birrens is thus left to rest almost entirely on any evidence that can be supplied by themselves.

Believing that a Polybian camp, if found in North Britain, must be ascribed to Agricola, and a Hyginian to a later date, Roy saw the importance of endeavouring to ascertain the particular system according to which each of our "Roman camps" had been planned. Warrantable inferences might then be drawn as to the history of the Roman occupation. Accordingly, after giving an elaborate account of the differences between the two systems, he proceeds to classify the camps under one or other of them. The large majority he proves to his own satisfaction to be Polybian, and therefore the work of Agricola. His reasoning is fair, with much appearance of being scientific. But he entered on his investigations with a mind greatly prejudiced in favour of Melville's assumptions ;¹ and it must, I think, strike any unbiassed reader that in his hands irregularities accommodate themselves too readily to the normal Polybian type. Yet it is chiefly on their agreement in shape and size with a Polybian camp that Roy has based the Roman origin of so many of our northern earthworks.

Roy himself, after he had put the finishing touches to his *Military Antiquities*, seems to have had his suspicions aroused as to the soundness of some of his arguments. This we may gather from the second of the two supplementary plates (L. and LI.) attached to his work but not referred to in the text. The first of these (Plate L.) represents a camp at Rae-Dykes of Ury, near Stonehaven. In his account of Agricola's campaigns, Roy, by means of a supposed series of Polybian camps, which he points to with the utmost confidence as having contained the troops of Agricola, traces the course of that general as far north as Strathmore in Forfarshire. The decisive battle between the Romans and the Caledonians he believes to have been fought "about Fettercairn, Montboddo, or still nearer Stonehaven." After he had expressed this opinion, he received from some quarter the plan of Rae-Dykes, which, in spite of its

¹ See Preliminary Remarks, pp. 48-51 (*supra*).

great irregularity, he had no difficulty in including among the number of Agricola's camps. Subsequently, that of Re-Dykes or Glenmailen, near the source of the Ythan, reached him.¹ As on no interpretation of Tacitus' narrative could Agricola have been so far north, Roy must have been perplexed. A representation of it is given on Plate LI.; but, though it is in every way nearer the form of a true Polybian camp than that at Ury, it is not assigned to Agricola or even called Roman. In some letterpress printed on the Plate, the gates are said to be "covered with traverses in the same manner as the camps *which are supposed to be Roman* on the south side of the Grampians." Either Roy was led, as a final conclusion, to entertain doubts as to Torwood Moor and other earthworks being Roman after all, or, more probably, Plate LI. was inserted by the Editor of the *Military Antiquities* on his own responsibility, who also marked the camp on Roy's map as *Cast. Rom.*, not *Agricolae*. Those who may now entertain similar doubts can hardly be regarded as showing a groundless distrust of Roy's conclusions, or even a disposition to look at them in too critical a light.²

Simply to refer all the more northern of these "camps" to a subsequent period of the Roman occupation is to get rid of one

¹ We distinctly learn this from Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. xii. p. 315, *note*, where it is said he at first put it down on his map as *Castra Agricolae*.

² Since the above was written, the two copies of the *Military Antiquities* left in MS. by General Roy have been obligingly examined at my request—that in Burlington House by Mr W. H. St John Hope, and that in the King's Library by Mr W. de Gray Birch. In neither of them is there an original of Plate LI. The Hon. Secretary of the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society also informs me that Colonel Shand's paper on the Glenmailen camp is not now in the archives of that Society. It seems never to have been returned by Whitaker, to whom it had been sent for perusal (*Proc. Soc. of Antiq. of Scotland*, vol. vii. p. 29). The drawing of the camp and the particulars given on the Plate were doubtless furnished by Shand. But he was evidently too proud of his discovery to insinuate the doubt as to its being a Roman camp, expressed in the words I have italicised. The insertion of this doubt must be due to the Editor or Editors of Roy's posthumous work, who had clearly seen that the existence of this "camp" so far north all but upset the reasoning by which Roy sought to identify the "camps" north of the Grampians with Agricola and the Romans.

difficulty by substituting another for it. In order to satisfy the presumed requirements of Roman history they have been transferred to Urbicus or Severus, and consequently to the later instead of the earlier system of Roman castrametation, without any reference to the considerations that led Roy to the conclusion not only that they must be the work of Agricola but that they are Roman and not native fieldworks. The matter, be the transference right or wrong, can hardly be settled in that off-hand fashion. Nor ought Torwood Moor to be separated from Glenmailen, as a comparison of Roy's Plates will show. In their characteristics the two are identical. They as well as all his other "camps" and "stations" may yet be proved to be Roman. But the review already given of the evidence hitherto advanced in favour of this opinion appears to indicate very clearly that more convincing evidence and further investigations are required before the popular belief can be held to be scientifically tenable.

In calling Birrens also an earth-works of a similar type Roman, and in seeking to identify them with "towns" mentioned by Ptolemy and the pseudo-Richard, Roy was quite in accord with the belief prevalent in his day. He has made no attempt, however, to assign to them any approximate date, nor to account for the silence of Roman military writers on the subject of works constructed on the same plan. Yet at Birrens at least there was undoubtedly a Roman or Romano-British settlement of some kind; and much can be said for Horsley's conjecture. Moreover, the fact that so many sculptured stones have been found near the present mounds, might go far to demonstrate that the latter are Roman too, could a connection in time be established between the sculptures and the mounds. But mere proximity of two objects of antiquity is not sufficient proof of their belonging to the same people and age.

To sum up: of the Annandale and other Dumfriesshire "Roman roads" of the O.M. it may meantime be said that, since they came into notice along with the "Roman camps," their presence in the future will depend largely on the ultimate fate of the latter. If the camps are Roman, the roads may remain; let the camps be exploded and it will be difficult to prevent the roads from disappearing with them.