

## IV.

## NOTE ON THE ANTIQUITY OF THE WHEEL CAUSEWAY.

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On 13th May 1895, Dr James Macdonald read to this Society a paper on the alleged Roman road in Roxburghshire, commonly called the Wheel Causeway. He admitted that the Causeway was a real road of some sort, but, for reasons which seem to me satisfactory, he denied that it possessed any claim to be considered a Roman road. He did not, however, go on to discuss its history, and his silence produced a doubtless unintentional impression that it might be a very modern affair, first dignified by some over-enthusiastic antiquary with the title Causeway. I was rash enough, myself, to suggest as much in an article which I wrote two or three years ago on the Maiden Way (*Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Arch. Society*, xiv. 432). A 'Wheelrig Head' and a 'Wheel Kirk' are close by, and Wheel Causeway might (I thought) have been named after them. This suggestion I find to be wrong: both road and name can lay claim to a respectable antiquity, and it may not be amiss to put together a few details about them. Though the road is not Roman, it was used in the Middle Ages as a pass from the headwaters of the North Tyne in Northumberland to the headwaters of the Jed and other tributaries of the Teviot.

The facts which concern us may be arranged in order of date, as follows:—

A.D. 1296. In May 1296 Edward I. of England went from Roxburgh by way of Gardeford and Wyel (Wiel, Wiell, Wyell) to Castleton and back again, as is testified in his "Itinerary." This "Itinerary," which exists in two practically identical versions, the one French, the other English, has been printed three times. It was communicated to the London Society of Antiquaries on Feb. 9th, 1826, and printed in *Archæologia*, xxi. 495, and it was issued by the Bannatyne Club in the first volume of its *Miscellany* (i. 275) in 1827 and in the *Instrumenta Publica* or Ragman Rolls (p. 178), published by the same club in 1834. The names throughout the "Itinerary" are ill-spelt, but it is probable that Gardeford is Jedburgh, and Wyel is Wheel. No causeway is mentioned, but the route taken is significant. Edward travelled from the Jed water along the line usually assigned to the causeway till he

descended into the valley at the top of the North Tyne, and thence he went to New Castleton by the route which is followed to-day by the North Tyne branch of the North British Railway.

A.D. 1348. A reference to the Capella of Whele occurs at this year in the *Rotuli Scotie* (i. 724). I owe the reference to Mr R. B. Armstrong's *History of Liddesdale* (1883), p. 86.

A.D. 1533. In 1533 an English raid was carried into Scotland by the Wheel Causeway, and a description of it by the then Earl of Northumberland, who was not himself present, exists among the MSS. of the British Museum. The description is quoted by Sir Walter Scott in his notes to the first canto of the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," and I need not repeat it in full. The material passages state that the English met "at Wawhope upon North Tyne water above Tyndail, . . . and so invadet Scotland at the hour of viij of the clok at nyght, at a place called Whele Causay." They proceeded to burn Branxholm and other neighbouring houses, and retired down Liddesdale. The account adds that "Gedworth (*i.e.* Jedburgh) is from the Wheles Causay vi myles." The topography is not quite accurately given, for Wawhope is not in England, as is implied, but eight or ten miles north of the Border, and Jedburgh is more than six miles from the Causeway, but these are simple inaccuracies committed by a narrator who was not present and did not know the ground. They need not disturb us.

A.D. 1590. A map, dated Dec. 1590, now preserved in the British Museum and published in the London *Archæologiu* (xxii. 161) shows the 'Wheele Causey' on the watershed between the North Tyne and Liddesdale, close to what is now called Deadwater; thence it passes northwards out of the map in the direction generally given it. It is plainly a route from the top of the North Tyne northwards into Scotland.

A.D. 1600. The 'Quheil in Liddisdale' is mentioned as belonging to Jedburgh Abbey (Armstrong's *Liddesdale*, p. 86).

A.D. 1608. Timothy Pont in his map of Liddesdale marks the Wheele Fell but no Causeway.

It appears from these facts that the route of the Wheel Causeway was in use as early as 1296, and the name familiar in the sixteenth century. Dr Macdonald has told us that the roadway shows signs of intentional mending at various points, and we may therefore conclude that we have in it a mediæval moorland track. It would be idle to speculate on the derivation of the name. Obviously it may have been called 'Wheel' because it was comparatively adapted to wheeled traffic: on the other hand, 'Wheel' occurs by itself long before the term 'Wheel Causeway,' and it may be a place name of quite different significance.